

The Soul and Barbed Wire



"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

I Corinthians, 15:51•



The Ascent

And the years go by. . . .

Not in swift staccato, as they joke in camp—"winter-summer, winter-summer"—but a long-drawn-out autumn, an endless winter, an unwilling spring, and only a summer that is short. In the Archipelago . . . summer is short.

Even one mere year, whew, how long it lasts! Even in one year how much time is left for you to think! For 330 days you stomp out to line-up in a drizzling, slushy rain, and in a piercing blizzard, and in a biting and still subzero cold. For 330 days you work away at hateful, alien work with your mind unoccupied. For 330 evenings you squinch up, wet, chilled, in the end-of-work line-up, waiting for the convoy to assemble from the distant watchtowers. And then there is the march out. And the march back. And bending down over 730 bowls of gruel, over 730 portions of grits. Yes, and waking up and going to sleep on your multiple bunk. And neither radio nor books to distract you. There are none, and thank God.

And that is only one year. And there are ten. There are twenty-five. . . .

And then, too, when you are lying in the hospital with dystrophy—that, too, is a good time—to think.

Think! Draw some conclusions from misfortune.

And all that endless time, after all, the prisoners' brains and souls are not inactive?! In the mass and from a distance they seem like swarming lice, but they are the crown of creation, right? After all, once upon a time a weak little spark of God was

breathed into them too—is it not true? So what has become of it now?

For centuries it was considered that a criminal was given a sentence for precisely this purpose, to think about his crime for the whole period of his sentence, be conscience-stricken, repent, and gradually reform.

But the Gulag Archipelago knows no pangs of conscience! Out of one hundred natives—five are thieves, and their transgressions are no reproach in their own eyes, but a mark of valor. They dream of carrying out such feats in the future even more brazenly and cleverly. They have nothing to repent. Another five . . . stole on a big scale, but not from people; in our times, the only place where one can steal on a big scale is from the state, which itself squanders the people's money without pity or sense—so what was there for such types to repent of? Maybe that they had not stolen more and divvied up—and thus remained free? And, so far as another 85 percent of the natives were concerned—they had never committed any crimes whatever. What were they supposed to repent of? That they had thought what they thought? (Nonetheless, they managed to pound and muddle some of them to such an extent that they did repent—of being so depraved. . . . Let us remember the desperation of Nina Peregud because she was unworthy of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya.) Or that a man had surrendered and become a POW in a hopeless situation? Or that he had taken employment under the Germans instead of dying of starvation? (Nonetheless, they managed so to confuse what was permitted and what was forbidden that there were some such who were tormented greatly: I would have done better to die than to have earned that bread.) Or that while working for nothing in the collective-farm fields, he had taken a mite to feed his children? Or that he had taken something from a factory for the same reason?

No, not only do you not repent, but your clean conscience, like a clear mountain lake, shines in your eyes. (And your eyes, purified by suffering, infallibly perceive the least haze in other eyes; for example, they infallibly pick out stool pigeons. And the Cheka-GB is not aware of this capacity of ours to see with the eyes of truth—it is our “secret weapon” against that institution. And State Security slips up here with us.)

It was in this nearly unanimous consciousness of our innocence that the main distinction arose between us and the hard-labor prisoners of Dostoyevsky, the hard-labor prisoners of P. Yakubovich. There they were conscious of being doomed renegades, whereas we were confidently aware that they could haul in any free person at all in just the same way they had hauled us in; that barbed wire was only a nominal dividing line between us. In earlier times there had been among the majority . . . the unconditional consciousness of personal guilt, and among us . . . the consciousness of disaster on a mammoth scale.

Just not to perish from the disaster! It had to be survived.

Wasn't this the root cause of the astounding rarity of camp suicides? Yes, rarity, although every ex-prisoner could in all probability recall a case of suicide. But he could recall even more escapes. There were certainly more escapes than suicides! (Admirers of socialist realism can praise me: I am pursuing an optimistic line.) And there were far more self-inflicted injuries, too, than there were suicides! But this, too, is an act indicating love of life—a straightforward calculation of sacrificing a portion to save the whole. I even imagine that, statistically speaking, there were fewer suicides per thousand of the population in camp than in freedom. I have no way of verifying this, of course.

But Skripnikova recalls how a man thirty years old hanged himself in 1931 in the women's toilet in Medvezhyegorsk—and hanged himself on the very day he was to be released! So maybe it was out of a feeling of disgust for the *freedom* of that time? (Two years earlier his wife had abandoned him, but he had not hanged himself then.) Well, the designer Voronov hanged himself in the club of the main camp center of Burepolom. The Communist Party official Aramovich, a second-termer, hanged himself in 1947 in the garret of the machinery-repair factory in Knyazh-Pogost. In Kraslag during the war years Lithuanians who had been reduced to a state of total despair—mainly because nothing in their former lives had prepared them for our cruelties—marched on infantrymen so as to get themselves shot down. In 1949, in the interrogation cell in Vladimir-Volynsk, a young fellow stunned by his interrogation tried to hang himself, but Boronyuk pulled him down in time. At the Kaluga Gates a former Latvian officer who was hospitalized in the camp infirm-

ary began to creep stealthily up some stairs—they led to the incomplete, empty upper stories. The “zechka” nurse saw him and went in pursuit. She caught up with him on the open balcony of the sixth floor. She caught him by the bathrobe, but the suicide slipped off the robe and stepped off into nothingness dressed in his underwear—and flashed past like a white streak of lightning in plain sight of busy Bolshaya Kaluzhskaya Street on a sunny summer day. When Emmi, a German Communist, learned about her husband’s death, she left the barracks in sub-zero weather undressed so as to catch cold. The Englishman Kelly, in the Vladimir Special Purpose Prison, very skillfully cut his veins with the door wide open and the jailer right there on the threshold.¹

I repeat: there are many others who can recount similar cases—but nonetheless, out of tens of millions who have served time, their total number will be small. Even among these examples, it is clear that a much greater proportion of suicides is accounted for by foreigners, Westerners; for them the transition to the Archipelago . . . was a more shattering blow than for us, so they put an end to it. And suicides were frequent among the loyalists too (but not among the hard-heads). And one can understand why—after all, their heads must have got thoroughly mixed up and filled with incessant buzzing. How could they stand it? (Zosia Zaleska, a Polish noblewoman who had devoted her entire life to the “cause of Communism” by serving in the Soviet intelligence service, tried to commit suicide three times during her interrogation: she tried to hang herself—they pulled her down; she cut her veins—but they stopped her; she jumped onto the window sill on the seventh floor—but the drowsy interrogator managed to grab hold of her by her dress. They saved her life three times—so they could shoot her.)

And, anyway, what is the correct interpretation of suicide? Ans Bernshtein, for example, insists that suicides are not at all cowards, that great will power is required for suicide. He himself wove a rope out of bandages and throttled himself by lifting his feet off the floor. But green circles appeared before his eyes and there was a ringing in his ears—and each time he involun-

1. He did it with a piece of enamel from the washbasin. Kelly hid it in his shoe and his shoe stood by his bed. Kelly dropped his blanket over the shoe to cover it, got out the piece of enamel, and cut his wrist vein beneath the blanket.

tarily put his feet back on the ground. During his last try the homemade rope broke—and he felt glad that he was still alive.

I am not going to dispute that perhaps even in the most extreme despair you still need will power to commit suicide. For a long time I would not have taken it upon myself to pass judgment on this at all. All my life long I was absolutely convinced that I would never consider suicide in any circumstances whatever. But not so long ago I dragged my way through gloomy months when it seemed to me that my whole life's cause had perished, especially if I remained alive. And I remember very clearly indeed the revulsion against life that came over me and the sensation that to die . . . was easier than to live. In my opinion, in a state like that it requires more strength of will to stay alive than to die. But, in all probability, with other people, in a different extremity, this turns out differently. And that is why from time immemorial the two opinions have existed.

It is a very spectacular idea to imagine all the innocently outraged millions beginning to commit suicide en masse, causing double vexation to the government—both by demonstrating their innocence and by depriving the government of free manpower. And maybe the government would have had to soften up and begin to take pity on its subjects?—well, hardly! Stalin wouldn't have been stopped by that. He would have merely picked up another twenty million people from freedom.

But it did not happen! People died by the hundreds of thousands and millions, driven, it would seem, to the extremity of extremities—but for some reason there were no suicides! Condemned to a misshapen existence, to waste away from starvation, to exhaustion from labor—they did not put an end to themselves!

And thinking the whole thing over, I found that proof to be the stronger. A suicide is always a bankrupt, always a human being in a blind alley, a human being who has gambled his life and lost and is without the will to continue the struggle. If these millions of helpless and pitiful vermin still did not put an end to themselves—this meant some kind of invincible feeling was alive inside them. Some very powerful idea.

This was their feeling of universal innocence. It was the sense of an ordeal of the entire people—like the Tatar yoke.

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But what if one has nothing to repent of—what then, what then does the prisoner think about all the time? "Poverty and prison . . . give wisdom." They do. But—where is it to be directed?

Here is how it was with many others, not just with me. Our initial, first prison sky consisted of black swirling storm clouds and black pillars of volcanic eruptions—this was the heaven of Pompeii, the heaven of the Day of Judgment, because it was not just anyone who had been arrested, but I—the center of this world.

Our last prison sky was infinitely high, infinitely clear, even paler than sky-blue.

We all (except religious believers) began from one point: we tried to tear our hair from our head, but our hair had been clipped close! . . . How could we? How could we not have seen those who informed against us?! How could we not have seen our enemies? (And how we hated them! How could we avenge ourselves on them?) And what recklessness! What blindness! How many errors! How can they be corrected? They must be corrected all the more swiftly! We must write. . . . We must speak out. . . . We must communicate. . . .

But—there is nothing that we can do. And nothing is going to save us! At the appropriate time we will sign Form 206. At the appropriate time the tribunal will read us our sentence in our presence, or we will learn it in absentia from the OSO.

Then there begins the period of transit prisons. Interspersed with our thoughts about our future camp, we now love to recall our past: How well we used to live! (Even if we lived badly.) But how many unused opportunities there were! How many flowers we left uncrumpled! . . . When will we now make up for it? If I only manage to survive—oh, how differently, how wisely, I am going to live! The day of our future *release*? It shines like a rising sun!

And the conclusion is: Survive to reach it! Survive! At any price!

This is simply a turn of phrase, a sort of habit of speech: "at any price."

But then the words swell up with their full meaning, and an awesome vow takes shape: to survive *at any price*.

And whoever takes that vow, whoever does not blink before its crimson burst—allows his own misfortune to overshadow both the entire common misfortune and the whole world.

This is the great fork of camp life. From this point the roads go to the right and to the left. One of them will rise and the other will descend. If you go to the right—you lose your life, and if you go to the left—you lose your conscience.

One's own order to oneself, "*Survive!*," is the natural splash of a living person. Who does not wish to survive? Who does not have the right to survive? Straining all the strength of our body! An order to all our cells: *Survive!* A powerful charge is introduced into the chest cavity, and the heart is surrounded by an electrical cloud so as not to stop beating. They lead thirty emaciated but wiry zeks three miles across the Arctic ice to a bathhouse. The bath is not worth even a warm word. Six men at a time wash themselves in five shifts, and the door opens straight into the subzero temperature, and four shifts are obliged to stand there before or after bathing—because they cannot be left without convoy. And not only does none of them get pneumonia. They don't even catch cold. (And for ten years one old man had his bath just like that, serving out his term from age fifty to sixty. But then he was released, he was at home. Warm and cared for, he burned up in one month's time. That order—"*Survive!*"—was not there. . . .)

But simply "to survive" does not yet mean "at any price." "At any price" means: at the price of someone else.

Let us admit the truth: At that great fork in the camp road, at that great divider of souls, it was not the majority of the prisoners that turned to the right. Alas, not the majority. But fortunately neither was it just a few. There are many of them—human beings—who made this choice. But they did not shout about themselves. You had to look closely to see them. Dozens of times this same choice had arisen before them too, but they always knew, and knew their own stand.

Take Arnold Susi, who was sent to camp at the age of about fifty. He had never been a believer, but he had always been fundamentally decent, he had never led any other kind of life—and he was not about to begin any other. He was a "Westerner." And what that meant was that he was doubly unprepared, and kept putting his foot into it all the time, and getting into serious difficulties. He worked at general work. And he was imprisoned

in a penalty camp—and he still managed to survive; he survived as exactly the same kind of person he had been when he came to camp. I knew him at the very beginning, and I knew him . . . afterward, and I can testify personally. True, there were three seriously mitigating circumstances which accompanied him throughout his camp life: He was classified as an invalid. For several years he received parcels. And thanks to his musical abilities, he got some additional nourishment out of amateur theatricals. But these three circumstances only explain why he survived. If they had not existed, he would have died. But he would not have changed. (And perhaps those who died did die because they did not change?)

And Tarashkevich, a perfectly ordinary, straightforward person, recalls: "There were many prisoners prepared to grovel for a bread ration or a puff of makhorka smoke. I was dying, but I kept my soul pure: I always called a spade a spade."

It has been known for many centuries that prison causes the profound rebirth of a human being. The examples are innumerable—such as that of Silvio Pellico: Through serving eight years he was transformed from a furious Carbonaro to a meek Roman Catholic.² In our country they always mention Dostoyevsky in this respect. And what about Pisarev? What remained of his revolutionary rebelliousness after imprisonment in the Peter and Paul Fortress? One can certainly debate whether this is good for revolution, but these transformations always proceed in the direction of deepening the soul. Ibsen wrote: "From lack of oxygen even the conscience will wither."³

By no means! It is not by any means so simple! In fact, it is the opposite! Take General Gorbatov: He had fought from his very youth, advanced through the ranks of the army, and had no time at all in which to think about things. But he was imprisoned, and how good it was—various events awakened within his recollection, such as his having suspected an innocent man of espionage; or his having ordered by mistake the execution of a quite innocent Pole.⁴ (Well, when else would he have remembered this? After rehabilitation he did not remember such things very much?) Enough has been written about prisoners' changes

2. S. Pellico, *Moi Temnitsy (My Prisons)*, St. Petersburg, 1836.

3. Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*.

4. *Novy Mir*, 1964, No. 4.

of heart to raise it to the level of penological theory. For example, in the prerevolutionary *Prison Herald* Luchenetsky wrote: "Darkness renders a person more sensitive to light; involuntary inactivity in imprisonment arouses in him a thirst for life, movement, work; the quiet compels profound pondering over his own 'I,' over surrounding conditions, over his own past and present, and forces him to think about his future."

Our teachers, who had never served time themselves, felt for prisoners only the natural sympathy of the outsider; Dostoyevsky, however, who served time himself, was a proponent of punishment! And this is something worth thinking about.

The proverb says: "Freedom spoils, and lack of freedom teaches."

But Pellico and Luchenetsky wrote about *prison*. But Dostoyevsky demanded punishment—in prison. But *what kind of* lack of freedom is it that educates?

Camp?

That is something to think about.

Of course, in comparison with prison our camps are poisonous and harmful.

Of course, they were not concerned with our souls when they pumped up the Archipelago. But nonetheless: is it really hopeless to stand fast in camp?

And more than that: was it really impossible for one's soul to rise in camp?

Here is E.K., who was born around 1940, one of those boys who, under Khrushchev, gathered to read poems on Mayakovsky Square, but were hauled off instead in Black Marias. From camp, from a Potma camp, he writes to his girl: "Here all the trivia and fuss have decreased. . . . I have experienced a turning point. . . . Here you harken to that voice deep inside you, which amid the surfeit and vanity used to be stifled by the roar from outside."

At the Samárka Camp in 1946 a group of intellectuals had reached the very brink of death: They were worn down by hunger, cold, and work beyond their powers. And they were even deprived of sleep. They had nowhere to lie down. Dugout barracks had not yet been built. Did they go and steal? Or squeal? Or whimper about their ruined lives? No! Foreseeing the approach of death in days rather than weeks, here is how they spent their last sleepless leisure, sitting up against the wall:

Timofeyev-Ressovsky gathered them into a "seminar," and they hastened to share with one another what one of them knew and the others did not—they delivered their last lectures to each other. Father Savely—spoke of "unshameful death," a priest academician—about patristics, one of the Uniate fathers—about something in the area of dogmatics and canonical writings, an electrical engineer—on the principles of the energetics of the future, and a Leningrad economist—on how the effort to create principles of Soviet economics had failed for lack of new ideas. Timofeyev-Ressovsky himself talked about the principles of microphysics. From one session to the next, participants were missing—they were already in the morgue.

That is the sort of person who can be interested in all this while already growing numb with approaching death—now that is an intellectual!

Pardon me, you . . . love life? You, you! You who exclaim and sing over and over and dance it too: "I love you, life! Oh, I love you, life!" Do you? Well, go on, love it! Camp life—love that too! It, too, is life!

There where there is no struggle with fate,
There you will resurrect your soul. . . .

You haven't understood a thing. When you get there, you'll collapse.

Along our chosen road are twists and turns and twists and turns. Uphill? Or up into the heavens? Let's go, let's stumble and stagger.

The day of liberation! What can it give us after so many years? We will change unrecognizably and so will our near and dear ones—and places which once were dear to us will seem stranger than strange.

And the thought of freedom after a time even becomes a forced thought. Farfetched. Strange.

The day of "liberation"! As if there were any liberty in this country! Or as if it were possible to liberate anyone who has not first become liberated in his own soul.

The stones roll down from under our feet. Downward, into the past! They are the ashes of the past!

And we ascend!



It is a good thing *to think* in prison, but it is not bad in camp either. Because, and this is the main thing, there are no *meetings*. For ten years you are free from all kinds of meetings! Is that not mountain air? While they openly claim your labor and your body, to the point of exhaustion and even death, the camp keepers do not encroach at all on your thoughts. They do not try to screw down your brains and to fasten them in place.⁵ And this results in a sensation of freedom of much greater magnitude than the freedom of one's feet to run along on the level.

No one tries to persuade you *to apply* for Party membership. No one comes around to squeeze membership dues out of you in *voluntary* societies. There is no trade union—the same kind of protector of your interests as an official lawyer before a tribunal. And there are no “production meetings.” You cannot be elected to any position. You cannot be appointed some kind of delegate. And the really important thing is . . . that they cannot compel you to be a propagandist. Nor—to listen to propaganda. Nor—when someone jerks the string, to shout: “We demand! . . . We will not permit! . . .” Nor—will they ever drag you off to the electoral precinct to vote freely and secretly for a single candidate. No one requires any “socialist undertakings” of you. Nor—self-criticism of your mistakes. Nor—articles in the wall newspaper. Nor—an interview with a provincial correspondent.

A free head—now is that not an advantage of life in the Archipelago?

And there is one more freedom: No one can deprive you of your family and property—you have already been deprived of them. What does not exist—not even God can take away. And this is a basic freedom.

It is good to think in imprisonment. And the most insignificant cause gives you a push in the direction of extended and important thoughts. Once in a long, long while, once in three years maybe, they brought a movie to camp. The film turned out to be—the cheapest kind of “sports” comedy—*The*

5. Except for the unfortunate period of the White Sea-Baltic Canal and the Moscow-Volga Canal.

*First Glove.** It was a bore. But from the screen they kept drumming into the audience the moral of the film:

The result is what counts, and the result is not in your favor.

On the screen they kept laughing. In the hall the audience kept laughing too. But blinking as you came out into the sunlit camp yard, you kept thinking about this phrase. And during the evening you kept thinking about it on your bunk. And Monday morning out in line-up. And you could keep thinking about it as long as you wanted. And where else could you have concentrated on it like that? And slow clarity descended into your brain.

This was no joke. This was an infectious thought. It has long since been inculcated in our Fatherland—and they keep on inculcating it over and over. The concept that only the material result counts has become so much a part of us that when, for example, some Tukhachevsky, Yagoda, or Zinoviev was proclaimed . . . a traitor who had sidled up to the enemy, people only exclaimed in a chorus of astonishment: "*What more could he want?*"

Now that is a high moral plane for you! Now that is a real unit of measure for you! "What more could he want?" Since he had a belly full of chow, and twenty suits, and two country homes, and an automobile, and an airplane, and fame—what more could he want?!! Millions of our compatriots find it unthinkable to imagine that a human being (and I am not speaking here of this particular trio) might have been motivated by something other than material gain!

To such an extent has everyone been indoctrinated with and absorbed the slogan: "The result is what counts."

Whence did this come to us?

In the first place—from the glory of our banners and the so-called "honor of our Motherland." We choked, cut down, and cut up all our neighbors in our expansion—and in our Fatherland it became well established that: The result is what counts.

And then from our Demidovs, Kabans and Tsybukins. They clambered up, without looking behind them to see whose ears they were smashing with their jackboots. And ever more firmly it became established among a once pious and openhearted people: The result is what counts.

And then—from all kinds of socialists, and most of all from the most modern, infallible, and intolerant Teaching, which consists of this one thing only: The result is what counts! It is important to forge a fighting Party! And to seize power! And to hold on to power! And to remove all enemies! And to conquer in pig iron and steel! And to launch rockets!

And though for this industry and for these rockets it was necessary to sacrifice the way of life, and the integrity of the family, and the spiritual health of the people, and the very soul of our fields and forests and rivers—to hell with them! The result is what counts!!!

But that is a lie! Here we have been breaking our backs for years at All-Union hard labor. Here in slow annual spirals we have been climbing up to an understanding of life—and from this height it can all be seen so clearly: It is not the result that counts! It is not the result—but *the spirit!* Not *what*—but *how*. Not what has been attained—but at what price.

And so it is with us the prisoners—if it is the result which counts, then it is also true that one must survive at any price. And what that means is: One must become a stool pigeon, betray one's comrades. And thereby get oneself set up comfortably. And perhaps even get time off sentence. In the light of the Infallible Teaching there is, evidently, nothing reprehensible in this. After all, if one does that, then the result will be in our favor, and the result is what counts.

No one is going to argue. It is pleasant to win. But not at the price of losing one's human countenance.

If it is the result which counts—you must strain every nerve and sinew to avoid *general work*. You must bend down, be servile, act meanly—yet hang on to your position as a trusty. And by this means . . . survive.

If it is the essence that counts, then the time has come to reconcile yourself to *general work*. To tatters. To torn skin on the hands. To a piece of bread which is smaller and worse. And perhaps . . . to death. But while you're alive, you drag your way along proudly with an aching back. And that is when—when you have ceased to be afraid of threats and are not chasing after rewards—you become the most dangerous character in the owl-like view of the bosses. Because . . . what hold do they have on you?

You even begin to like carrying hand barrows with rubbish (yes, but not with stone!) and discussing with your work mate how the movies influence literature. You begin to like sitting down on the empty cement mixing trough and lighting up a smoke next to your bricklaying. And you are actually and simply proud if, when the foreman passes you, he squints at your courses, checks their alignment with the rest of the wall, and says: "Did you lay that? Good line."

You need that wall like you need a hole in the head, nor do you believe it is going to bring closer the happy future of the people, but, pitiful tattered slave that you are, you smile at this creation of your own hands.

The Anarchist's daughter, Galya Venediktova, worked as a nurse in the Medical Section, but when she saw that what went on there was *not healing* but only the business of getting fixed up in a good spot—out of stubbornness she left and went off to general work, taking up a spade and a sledge hammer. And she says that this saved her spiritually.

For a good person even a crust is healthy food, and to an evil person even meat brings no benefit.

(Now that is no doubt how it really is—but what if there is not even a crust? . . .)



And as soon as you have renounced that aim of "surviving at any price," and gone where the calm and simple people go—then imprisonment begins to transform your former character in an astonishing way. To transform it in a direction most unexpected to you.

And it would seem that in this situation feelings of malice, the disturbance of being oppressed, aimless hate, irritability, and nervousness ought to multiply.⁶ But you yourself do not notice how, with the impalpable flow of time, slavery nurtures in you the shoots of contradictory feelings.

6. The revolutionaries of the past left many traces of this. Serafimovich, in one of his stories, describes the society of the exiles in this way. The Bolshevik Olminsky writes: "Bitterness and spite—these feelings are so familiar to the prisoner, so close to his soul." He used to pour out his anger on those who came to visit him. He writes that he lost all taste for work too. But then the Russian revolutionaries (in the overwhelming mass) did not get and did not serve out any *real* (long) sentences.

Once upon a time you were sharply intolerant. You were constantly in a rush. And you were constantly short of time. And now you have time with interest. You are surfeited with it, with its months and its years, behind you and ahead of you—and a beneficial calming fluid pours through your blood vessels—patience.

You are ascending. . . .

Formerly you never forgave anyone. You judged people without mercy. And you praised people with equal lack of moderation. And now an understanding mildness has become the basis of your uncategorical judgments. You have come to realize your own weakness—and you can therefore understand the weakness of others. And be astonished at another's strength. And wish to possess it yourself.

The stones rustle beneath our feet. We are ascending. . . .

With the years, armor-plated restraint covers your heart and all your skin. You do not hasten to question and you do not hasten to answer. Your tongue has lost its flexible capacity for easy oscillation. Your eyes do not flash with gladness over good tidings nor do they darken with grief.

For you still have to verify whether that's how it is going to be. And you also have to work out—what is gladness and what is grief.

And now the rule of your life is this: Do not rejoice when you have found, do not weep when you have lost.

Your soul, which formerly was dry, now ripens from suffering. And even if you haven't come to love your neighbors in the Christian sense, you are at least learning to love those close to you.

Those close to you in spirit who surround you in slavery. And how many of us come to realize: It is particularly in slavery that for the first time we have learned to recognize genuine friendship!

And also those close to you in blood, who surrounded you in your former life, who loved you—while you played the tyrant over them. . . .

Here is a rewarding and inexhaustible direction for your thoughts: Reconsider all your previous life. Remember everything you did that was bad and shameful and take thought—can't you possibly correct it now?

Yes, you have been imprisoned for nothing. You have nothing to repent of before the state and its laws.

But . . . before your own conscience? But . . . in relation to other individuals?

. . . Following an operation, I am lying in the surgical ward of a camp hospital. I cannot move. I am hot and feverish, but nonetheless my thoughts do not dissolve into delirium—and I am grateful to Dr. Boris Nikolayevich Kornfeld, who is sitting beside my cot and talking to me all evening. The light has been turned out—so it will not hurt my eyes. He and I—and there is no one else in the ward.

Fervently he tells me the long story of his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. This conversion was accomplished by an educated, cultivated person, one of his cellmates, some good-natured old fellow like Platon Karatayev. I am astonished at the conviction of the new convert, at the ardor of his words.

We know each other very slightly, and he was not the one responsible for my treatment, but there was simply no one here with whom he could share his feelings. He was a gentle and well-mannered person. I could see nothing bad in him nor did I know anything bad about him. However, I was on guard because Kornfeld had now been living for two months in the hospital barracks without going outside, because he had shut himself up in here, at his place of work, and avoided moving around camp at all.

This meant . . . he was afraid of having his throat cut. In our camp it had recently become fashionable—to cut the throats of stool pigeons. This has an effect. But who could guarantee that only stoolies were getting their throats cut? One prisoner had had his throat cut in a clear case of settling a sordid grudge. And therefore . . . the self-imprisonment of Kornfeld in the hospital did not yet prove at all that he was a stool pigeon.

It is already late. All the hospital is asleep. Kornfeld is ending up his story thus:

"And on the whole, do you know, I have become convinced that there is no punishment that comes to us in this life on earth which is undeserved. Superficially it can have nothing to do with what we are guilty of in actual fact, but if you go over your life with a fine-tooth comb and ponder it deeply, you will always be able to hunt down that transgression of yours for which you have now received this blow."

I cannot see his face. Through the window come only the scattered reflections of the lights of the perimeter outside. And the door from the corridor gleams in a yellow electrical glow. But there is such mystical knowledge in his voice that I shudder.

These were the last words of Boris Kornfeld. Noiselessly he went out into the nighttime corridor and into one of the nearby wards and there lay down to sleep. Everyone slept. And there was no one with whom he could speak even one word. And I went off to sleep myself.

And I was wakened in the morning by running about and tramping in the corridor; the orderlies were carrying Kornfeld's body to the operating room. He had been dealt eight blows on the skull with a plasterer's mallet while he still slept. (In our camp it was the custom to kill immediately after rising time, when the barracks were all unlocked and open and when no one yet had got up, when no one was stirring.) And he died on the operating table, without regaining consciousness.

And so it happened that Kornfeld's prophetic words were his last words on earth. And, directed to me, they lay upon me as an inheritance. You cannot brush off that kind of inheritance by shrugging your shoulders.

But by that time I myself had matured to similar thoughts.

I would have been inclined to endow his words with the significance of a universal law of life. However, one can get all tangled up that way. One would have to admit that on that basis those who had been punished even more cruelly than with prison—those shot, burned at the stake—were some sort of super-evildoers. (And yet . . . the innocent are those who get punished most zealously of all.) And what would one then have to say about our so evident torturers: Why does not fate punish *them*? Why do they prosper?

(And the only solution to this would be that the meaning of earthly existence lies not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering, but . . . in the development of the soul. From *that* point of view our torturers have been punished most horribly of all: they are turning into swine, they are departing downward from humanity. From that point of view punishment is inflicted on those whose development . . . *holds out hope*.)

But there was something in Kornfeld's last words that touched a sensitive chord, and that I accept quite completely *for myself*. And many will accept the same for themselves.

In the seventh year of my imprisonment I had gone over and re-examined my life quite enough and had come to understand why everything had happened to me: both prison and, as an additional piece of ballast, my malignant tumor. And I would not have murmured even if all that punishment had been considered inadequate.

Punishment? But . . . whose?

Well, just think about that—*whose?*

I lay there a long time in that recovery room from which Kornfeld had gone forth to his death, and all alone during sleepless nights I pondered with astonishment my own life and the turns it had taken. In accordance with my established camp custom I set down my thoughts in rhymed verses—so as to remember them. And the most accurate thing is to cite them here—just as they came from the pillow of a hospital patient, when the hard-labor camp was still shuddering outside the windows in the wake of a revolt.

When was it that I completely
Scattered the good seeds, one and all?
For after all I spent my boyhood
In the bright singing of Thy temples.

Bookish subtleties sparkled brightly,
Piercing my arrogant brain,
The secrets of the world were . . . in my grasp,
Life's destiny . . . as pliable as wax.

Blood seethed—and every swirl
Gleamed iridescently before me,
Without a rumble the building of my faith
Quietly crumbled within my heart.

But passing here between being and nothingness,
Stumbling and clutching at the edge,
I look behind me with a grateful tremor
Upon the life that I have lived.

Not with good judgment nor with desire
Are its twists and turns illumined.
But with the even glow of the Higher Meaning
Which became apparent to me only later on.

And now with measuring cup returned to me,
Scooping up the living water,
God of the Universe! I believe again!
Though I renounced You, You were with me!

Looking back, I saw that for my whole conscious life I had not understood either myself or my strivings. What had seemed for so long to be beneficial now turned out in actuality to be fatal, and I had been striving to go in the opposite direction to that which was truly necessary to me. But just as the waves of the sea knock the inexperienced swimmer off his feet and keep tossing him back onto the shore, so also was I painfully tossed back on dry land by the blows of misfortune. And it was only because of this that I was able to travel the path which I had always really wanted to travel.

It was granted me to carry away from my prison years on my bent back, which nearly broke beneath its load, this essential experience: *how* a human being becomes evil and *how* good. In the intoxication of youthful successes I had felt myself to be infallible, and I was therefore cruel. In the surfeit of power I was a murderer, and an oppressor. In my most evil moments I was convinced that I was doing good, and I was well supplied with systematic arguments. And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains . . . an unuprooted small corner of evil.

Since then I have come to understand the truth of all the religions of the world: They struggle with the *evil inside a human being* (inside every human being). It is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person.

And since that time I have come to understand the falsehood of all the revolutions in history: They destroy only *those carriers* of evil contemporary with them (and also fail, out of

haste, to discriminate the carriers of good as well). And they then take to themselves as their heritage the actual evil itself, magnified still more.

The Nuremberg Trials have to be regarded as one of the special achievements of the twentieth century: they killed the very idea of evil, though they killed very few of the people who had been infected with it. (Of course, Stalin deserves no credit here. He would have preferred to explain less and shoot more.) And if by the twenty-first century humanity has not yet blown itself up and has not suffocated itself—perhaps it is this direction that will triumph?

Yes, and if it does not triumph—then all humanity's history will have turned out to be an empty exercise in marking time, without the tiniest mite of meaning! Whither and to what end will we otherwise be moving? To beat the enemy over the head with a club—even cavemen knew that.

"Know thyself!" There is nothing that so aids and assists the awakening of omniscience within us as insistent thoughts about one's own transgressions, errors, mistakes. After the difficult cycles of such ponderings over many years, whenever I mentioned the heartlessness of our highest-ranking bureaucrats, the cruelty of our executioners, I remember myself in my captain's shoulder boards and the forward march of my battery through East Prussia, enshrouded in fire, and I say: "So were we any better?"

When people express vexation, in my presence, over the West's tendency to crumble, its political shortsightedness, its divisiveness, its confusion—I recall too: "Were we, before passing through the Archipelago, more steadfast? Firmer in our thoughts?"

And that is why I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me: "*Bless you, prison!*"

Lev Tolstoi was right when he *dreamed* of being put in prison. At a certain moment that giant began to dry up. He actually needed prison as a drought needs a shower of rain!

All the writers who wrote about prison but who did not themselves serve time there considered it their duty to express sympathy for prisoners and to curse prison. I . . . have served enough time there. I nourished my soul there, and I say without hesitation:

"*Bless you, prison, for having been in my life!*"

(And from beyond the grave come replies: It is very well for you to say that—when you came out of it alive!)

■ *Or Corruption?*

But I have been brought up short: You are *not talking about the subject* at all! You have got off the track again—onto prison! And what you are supposed to be talking about is *camp*.

But I was also, I thought, talking about camp. Well, all right, I'll shut up. I shall give some space to contrary opinions. Many camp inmates will object to what I have said and will say that they did not observe any "ascent" of the soul, that this is nonsense, and that corruption took place at every step.

More insistent and more significant than others (because he had already written about all this) was Shalamov's objection:

In the camp situation human beings never remain human beings—the camps were created to this end.

All human emotions—love, friendship, envy, love of one's fellows, mercy, thirst for fame, honesty—fell away from us along with the meat of our muscles. . . . We had no pride, no vanity, and even jealousy and passion seemed to be Martian concepts. . . . The only thing left was anger—the most enduring of human emotions.

We came to understand that truth and falsehood were kin sisters.

Friendship is born neither of need nor of misfortune. If friendship does arise between human beings—it means that conditions are not that difficult. If misfortune and need have joined hands—it means they were not *in extremis*. Grief is insufficiently sharp and deep if it can be shared with friends.

There is only one distinction here to which Shalamov agrees:

Ascent, growth in profundity, the development of human beings, is possible in *prison*. But

... camp—is wholly and consistently a negative school of life. There is nothing either necessary or useful that anyone derives from it. The prisoner learns flattery, falsehood, and petty and large-scale meanness. . . . When he returns home, he sees not only that he has not grown during his time in camp, but that his interests have become meager and crude.¹

Y. Ginzburg also agrees with this distinction: "Prison ennobled people, while camp corrupted them."

And how can one object to that?

In prison, both in solitary confinement and outside solitary too, a human being confronts his grief face to face. This grief is a mountain, but he has to find space inside himself for it, to familiarize himself with it, to digest it, and it him. This is the highest form of moral effort, which has always ennobled every human being.² A duel with years and with walls constitutes moral work and a path upward (if you can climb it). If you share those years with a comrade, it is never in a situation in which you are called on to die in order to save his life, nor is it necessary for him to die in order for you to survive. You have the possibility of entering not into conflict but into mutual support and enrichment.

But in camp, it would appear, you do not have that path. Bread is not issued in equal pieces, but thrown onto a pile—go grab! Knock down your neighbors, and tear it out of their hands! The quantity of bread issued is such that one or two people have to die for each who survives. The bread is hung high up on a pine tree—go fell it. The bread is deposited in a coal mine—go down and mine it. Can you think about your own

1. Shalamov also considers it an indication of the human being's oppression and corruption in camp that he "lives there for long years subject to someone else's will, to someone else's mind." But this is something I have chosen to set aside in a footnote—because, in the first place, one can say just the same thing about many free people (not counting the scope for activity in minor details which prisoners have as well), and because, in the second place, the fatalistic character obligatorily instilled into the native of the Archipelago by his ignorance of his fate and his inability to influence it tends rather to ennoble him, to free him from fruitless bustle.

2. How interesting people become in prison! I have known people who became tiresome bores after their release, yet in prison you simply couldn't tear yourself away from conversations with them.

grief, about the past and the future, about humanity and God? Your mind is absorbed in vain calculations which for the present moment cut you off from the heavens—and tomorrow are worth nothing. You *hate* labor—it is your principal enemy. You hate your companions—rivals in life and death.³ You are reduced to a frazzle by intense *envy* and alarm lest somewhere behind your back others are right now dividing up that bread which could be yours, that somewhere on the other side of the wall a tiny potato is being ladled out of the pot which could have ended up in your own bowl.

Camp life was organized in such a way that envy pecked at your soul from all sides, even the best-defended soul. Envy also extended to *terms* and to *release* itself. In 1945 we, the 58's, had to see the nonpolitical offenders off at the gates (as a result of Stalin's amnesty). What were our feelings toward them? Gladness for them because they were going home? No, it was envy because it was unjust to free them and to hold us. And V. Vlasov, who got a twenty-year term, served out his first ten years calmly, for who was not serving out ten years? But in 1947–1948 they began to release many others—and he envied them, got nervous, and was eating his heart out: How was it that he had received a sentence of twenty? How galling it was to have to serve that second tenner! (And I did not ask him, but I suppose that when these others began to return to camp as *repeaters*, he then must have calmed down.) And in 1955–1956 the 58's were being released on a mass scale, and the nonpolitical offenders were left in the camps. What did they feel at that point? A sense of justice because the long-suffering article, after forty years of incessant persecutions, had at long last been pardoned? No, in fact, there was universal *envy* (I received many letters of this sort in 1963): they had freed "the enemies who were far worse than us habitual criminals." And why then are we still here? For what?

And in addition you are constantly gripped by *fear*: of slipping off even that pitifully low level to which you are clinging, of losing your work which is still not the hardest, of coming a cropper on a prisoner transport, of ending up in a Strict Regimen Camp. And on top of that, you got beaten if you were weaker

3. P. Yakubovich declared: "Nearly every hard-labor convict dislikes every other one." Yet where he was there was no competition for survival.

than all the rest, or else you yourself beat up those weaker than you. And wasn't this corruption? *Soul mange* is what A. Rubailo, an old camp veteran, called this swift decay under external pressure.

Amid these vicious feelings and tense petty calculations, when and on what foundation could you ascend?

Chekhov, even before our Corrective Labor Camps, observed and identified this soul corruption on Sakhalin. He wrote correctly that the vices of prisoners arose from their lack of freedom, enslavement, terror, and constant hunger. And their vices were dishonesty, slyness, cowardice, faintheartedness, stool-pigeoning, thievery. Experience had demonstrated to the hard-labor convict that in the struggle for existence deceit was the most reliable means.

And wasn't all this multiplied tenfold among us? So isn't it the right time not to object, and not to rise to the defense of some sort of alleged camp "ascent," but to describe hundreds, thousands of cases of genuine soul corruption? To cite examples of how no one could resist the camp philosophy of Yashka, the Dzhezkazgan work assigner: "The more you spit on people, the more they'll esteem you." To tell how newly arrived front-line soldiers (in Kraslag in 1942) had no sooner scented the thieves' atmosphere than they themselves undertook *to play the thief—to plunder* the Lithuanians and to fatten up off their foodstuffs and possessions: You greenhorns can go die! Or how certain Vlasov men began *to pass for thieves* out of the conviction that that was the only way to survive in camp. Or about that assistant professor of literature who became a thief Ringleader. Or to be astounded—via the example of Chulpenyov—at how infectious that camp ideology was. Chulpenyov stood it for seven years on general work at timbering and became a famous lumberjack, but landed in a hospital with a broken leg, and was subsequently offered a position as a work assigner. He had no need for this job. He could certainly have dragged out as a lumberjack the two and a half years he had still to serve since the management made a great fuss over him—but how could he turn down the temptation? After all, it is a rule of camp philosophy: "If they give, take it!" And Chulpenyov became a work assigner for just six months, which were the most restless, troubled, and dismal of his whole term. (And it is now a long time since his term was

served out, and he will tell you with an openhearted smile about the tall pines—but there is a stone on his heart because of those who died as a result of his *slave-driving*: a Latvian six and a half feet tall, a captain who had sailed the seven seas—yes, and was he the only one?)

Conscious instigation of one prisoner against another can lead to just such awful “soul mange”! In Unzhlag in 1950, Moiseyevaite, who, even though she was touched in the head, was still being marched to and from work under convoy, paid no attention to the convoy and went off to look for “her mother.” She was seized, tied to a post at the gatehouse, and it was announced that “because of her escape attempt” the whole camp would be deprived of the next Sunday (a standard trick)! And therefore as the brigades returned from work they spat at the trussed-up woman, and some even struck her: “Because of you, bitch, we don’t have a rest day.” Moiseyevaite only smiled benignly.

And how much corruption was introduced by that democratic and progressive system of “trustworthy watchmen”—which in our zek terminology became converted to *self-guarding*—introduced back in 1918? After all, this was one of the main streams of camp corruption: the enlistment of prisoners in the trustworthy guards! You—had fallen. You—were punished. You—had been uprooted from life—but you want to avoid the very bottom of the pile? You want to hover over someone else, rifle in hand? Over your brother? Here! Take it! And if he runs—shoot him! We will even call you *comrade*. And we will give you a Red Army man’s ration.

And . . . he grows proud. And . . . he tightens his grip on his gun stock. And . . . he shoots. And . . . he is even more severe than the free guards. (How is one to understand this: Was it really a purblind faith in social initiative? Or was it just an icy, contemptuous calculation based on the lowest human feelings?)

After all, it was not just a matter of “self-guarding” either. There were also “self-supervision,” and “self-oppression”—right up to the situation in the thirties when all of them, all the way up to the camp chief, were zeks. Including the transport chief. The production chief. (And how could it have been otherwise anyway—when there were only thirty-seven Chekists to 100,000 zeks on the White Sea–Baltic Canal?) Yes, and even *security chiefs* were zeks too. One could not have carried “self-supervi-

sion" any further than that: The zeks were conducting interrogations of themselves. They were recruiting stool pigeons to denounce themselves.

Yes, yes. But I am not going to examine those countless cases of corruption here. They are well known to everyone. They have already been described, and they will be described again. It is quite enough to admit they took place. This is the general trend, this is as it should be.

Why repeat about each and every house that in subzero weather it loses its warmth? It is much more surprising to note that there are houses which retain their warmth even in subzero weather.

Shalamov says: Everyone imprisoned in camp was spiritually impoverished. But whenever I recall or encounter a former zek, I find a real personality.

Elsewhere Shalamov himself writes that he wouldn't betray other zeks! He wouldn't become a brigadier and compel others to work.

Why is that, Varlam Tikhonovich? Why is it that out of a clear sky it appears that you would refuse to become either a stoolie or a brigadier—if it is the case that no one in camp can avoid or sidestep that slippery slope of corruption? Given the fact that truth and falsehood . . . are kin sisters? Does it mean that you did nonetheless grasp at some branch sticking out? Does it mean that you found a footing on some stone—and did not slide down any further? And maybe, despite everything, anger is not really the most long-lived feeling there is? Do you not refute your own concept with your character and verses?⁴

And how is it that genuine religious believers survived in camp (as we mentioned more than once)? In the course of this book we have already mentioned their self-confident procession through the Archipelago—a sort of silent religious procession with invisible candles. How some among them were mowed down by machine guns and those next in line continued their march. A steadfastness unheard of in the twentieth century! And it was

4. Alas, he decided not to refute it. . . . As if out of stubbornness, he continued this argument. . . . On February 23, 1972, in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, he published a renunciation (for some reason now that all the threats have passed): "The problematics of the *Kolyma Stories* have long since been crossed out by life." This renunciation was printed in a black mourning frame, and thus all of us understood that Shalamov had died. (Footnote of 1972.)

not in the least for show, and there weren't any declamations. Take some Aunt Dusya Chmil, a round-faced, calm, and quite illiterate old woman. The convoy guards called out to her: "Chmil! What is your article?"

And she gently, good-naturedly replied: "Why are you asking, my boy? It's all written down there. I can't remember them all." (She had a bouquet of sections under Article 58.)

"Your term!"

Auntie Dusya sighed. She wasn't giving such contradictory answers in order to annoy the convoy. In her own simplehearted way she pondered this question: Her term? Did they really think it was given to human beings to know their terms?

"What term! . . . Till God forgives my sins—till then I'll be serving time."

"You are a silly, you! A silly!" The convoy guards laughed. "Fifteen years you've got, and you'll serve them all, and maybe some more besides."

But after two and a half years of her term had passed, even though she had sent no petitions—all of a sudden a piece of paper came: release!

How could one not envy those people? Were circumstances more favorable for them? By no means! It is a well-known fact that the "nuns" were kept only with prostitutes and thieves at penalty camps. And yet who was there among the religious believers whose soul was corrupted? They died—most certainly, but . . . they were not corrupted.

And how can one explain that certain unstable people found faith right there in camp, that they were strengthened by it, and that they survived uncorrupted?

And many more, scattered about and unnoticed, came to their allotted turning point and made no mistake in their choice. Those who managed to see that things were not only bad for them, but even worse, even harder, for their neighbors.

And all those who, under the threat of a penalty zone and a new term of imprisonment, refused to become stoolies?

How, in general, can one explain Grigory Ivanovich Grigoryev, a soil scientist? A scientist who volunteered for the People's Volunteer Corps in 1941—and the rest of the story is a familiar one. Taken prisoner near Vyazma, he spent his whole captivity in a German camp. And the subsequent story is also

familiar. When he returned, he was arrested by us and given a tenner. I came to know him in winter, engaged in general work in Ekibastuz. His forthrightness gleamed from his big quiet eyes, some sort of unwavering forthrightness. This man was never able to bow in spirit. And he didn't bow in camp either, even though he worked only two of his ten years in his own field of specialization, and didn't receive food parcels from home for nearly the whole term. He was subjected on all sides to the camp philosophy, to the camp corruption of soul, but he was incapable of adopting it. In the Kemerovo camps (Antibess) the security chief kept trying to recruit him as a stoolie. Grigoryev replied to him quite honestly and candidly: "I find it quite *repulsive* to talk to you. You will find many willing without me." "You bastard, you'll crawl on all fours." "I would be better off hanging myself on the first branch." And so he was sent off to a penalty situation. He stood it for half a year. And he made *mistakes* which were even more unforgivable: When he was sent on an agricultural work party, he refused (as a soil scientist) to accept the post of brigadier offered him. He hoed and scythed with enthusiasm. And even more stupidly: in Ekibastuz at the stone quarry he refused to be a work checker—only because he would have had to pad the work sheets for the sloggers, for which, later on, when they caught up with it, the eternally drunk free foreman would have to pay the penalty. (But would he?) And so he went to break rocks! His honesty was so monstrously unnatural that when he went out to process potatoes with the vegetable storeroom brigade, he did not steal any, though everyone else did. When he was in a good post, in the privileged repair-shop brigade at the pumping-station equipment, he left simply because he refused to wash the socks of the free bachelor construction supervisor, Treivish. (His fellow brigade members tried to persuade him: Come on now, isn't it all the same, the kind of work you do? But no, it turned out it was not at all the same to him!) How many times did he select the worst and hardest lot, just so as not to have to offend against conscience—and he didn't, not in the least, and I am a witness. And even more: because of the astounding influence on his body of his bright and spotless human spirit (though no one today believes in any such influence, no one understands it) the organism of Grigory Ivanovich, who was no longer young (close to fifty), grew stronger in camp; his earlier rheumatism of the

joints disappeared completely, and he became particularly healthy after the typhus from which he recovered: in winter he went out in cotton sacks, making holes in them for his head and his arms—and he did not catch cold!

So wouldn't it be more correct to say that no camp can corrupt those who have a stable nucleus, who do not accept that pitiful ideology which holds that "human beings are created for happiness," an ideology which is done in by the first blow of the work assigner's cudgel?

Those people became corrupted in camp who before camp had not been enriched by any morality at all or by any spiritual upbringing. (This is not at all a theoretical matter—since during our glorious half-century millions of them grew up.)

Those people became corrupted in camp who had already been corrupted out in freedom or who were ready for it. Because people are corrupted in freedom too, sometimes even more effectively than in camp.

The convoy officer who ordered that Moiseyevaite be tied to a post in order to be mocked—had he not been corrupted more profoundly than the camp inmates who spat on her?

And for that matter did every one of the brigade members spit on her? Perhaps only two from each brigade did. In fact, that is probably what happened.

Tatyana Falike writes: "Observation of people convinced me that no man could become a scoundrel in camp if he had not been one before."

If a person went swiftly bad in camp, what it might mean was that he had not just gone bad, but that that inner foulness which had not previously been needed had disclosed itself.

M. A. Voichenko has his opinion: "In camp, existence did not determine consciousness, but just the opposite: consciousness and steadfast faith in the human essence decided whether you became an animal or remained a human being."

A drastic, sweeping declaration! . . . But he was not the only one who thought so. The artist Ivashev-Musatov passionately argued exactly the same thing.

Yes, camp corruption was a mass phenomenon. But not only because the camps were awful, but because in addition we Soviet people stepped upon the soil of the Archipelago spiritually disarmed—long since prepared to be corrupted, already tinged

by it out in freedom, and we strained our ears to hear from the old camp veterans "how to live in camp."

But we ought to have known how to live (and how to die) without any camp.

And perhaps, Varlam Tikhonovich Shalamov, as a general rule friendship between people does arise in need and misfortune, even in extreme misfortune too—but not between such withered and nasty people as we were, given our decades of upbringing?

If corruption was so inevitable, then why did Olga Lvovna Sliozberg not abandon her freezing friend on the forest trail, but stay behind for nearly certain death together with her—and save her? Wasn't that an extreme of misfortune?

And if corruption was so inevitable, then where did Vasily Mefodyevich Yakovenko spring from? He served out two terms, had only just been released, was living as a free employee in Vorkuta, and was just beginning to crawl around without an escort and acquire his first tiny nest. It was 1949. In Vorkuta they began to rearrest former zeks and give them new sentences. An arrest psychosis! There was panic among the free employees! How could they hold on to their freedom? How could they be less noticeable? But Y. D. Grodzensky, a friend of Yakovenko from the same Vorkuta camp, was arrested. During the interrogation he was losing strength and was close to death. There was no one to bring him food parcels. And Yakovenko fearlessly brought him food parcels! If you want to, you dogs, rake me in too!

Why was *this man* not corrupted!

And do not *all* those who survived remember one or another person who reached out a hand to him in camp and saved him at a difficult moment?

Yes, the camps were calculated and intended to corrupt. But this didn't mean that they succeeded in crushing *everyone*.

Just as in nature the process of oxidation never occurs without an accompanying reduction (one substance oxidizes while at the same time another reduces), so in camp, too (and everywhere in life), there is no corruption without ascent. They exist alongside one another.

In the next part I hope still to show how in other camps, in the Special Camps, a different *environment* was created after a

certain time: the process of corruption was greatly hampered and the process of ascent became attractive even to the camp careerists.



Well, and what about *correction*? How did things go with correction, after all? ("Correction" is a social and state concept and does not coincide with ascent.) All the systems of justice in the world, not just our own, dream that criminals will not merely serve out their term but will also become corrected in the process, in other words behave so as not to return to the defendant's bench in court, particularly for the same offense.⁵

Dostoyevsky exclaims: "Whom did hard labor ever correct?"

The ideal of correction existed in Russian legislation after the great reform. (The whole of Chekhov's *Sakhalin* grew out of that ideal.) But was it ever successfully implemented?

P. Yakubovich thought about this a great deal and wrote: The terrorist regimen of hard labor "corrects" only those who have not become depraved—but they would not commit a second crime even without it. Yet this regimen only depraves a corrupt person, compelling him to be sly and hypocritical, and to do his utmost not to leave any clues behind.

What can one say about our Corrective Labor Camps? Students of penology (*Gefängniskunde*) always believed that a prisoner must not be driven to total despair, that he must always be left hope and a way out. The reader has already seen that our Corrective Labor Camps drove prisoners only and precisely to total despair.

Chekhov spoke truly: "Soul-searching—that is what's truly needed for correction." But it was soul-searching that the managers of our camps feared most of all. The common barracks, brigades, work collectives, were all specially designed to disperse and dismember that dangerous soul-searching.

What sort of correction could there be in our camps! All they could do was damage: instill the thieves' morality, instill the

5. Nonetheless, they never strove to "correct" the 58's—in other words to avoid imprisoning them a second time. We have already cited the frank statements of the penologists on this subject. They wanted to exterminate the 58's through labor. And the fact that we survived was due to . . . our own initiative.

cruel camp ways as the general law of life. ("Criminogenic places" in the penologists' language—in other words, crime schools.)

I. G. Pisarev, when he was completing his lengthy prison sentence, wrote, in 1963: "It becomes particularly hard, because you leave here an incurable nervous wreck, with your health irreparably ruined by lack of proper food and by incessant incitement. Here people are corrupted once and for all. Maybe butter wouldn't have melted in a man's mouth before—but now you'd never manage to put salt on his tail. If you say 'pig' to a person for seven years, he will end up by grunting. . . . It is only the first year that punishes the prisoner; all the rest simply embitter him. He adapts to the conditions, and that is all. The law, with its long sentences and its cruelty, punishes the criminal's family more than it does him."

Here is another letter. "It is painful and frightening to leave life without having seen anything and without having done anything, and no one even cares about you except, in all likelihood, your mother, who never ceases to wait for you her whole life long."

And here is what Aleksandr Kuzmich K., who devoted much thought to the matter, wrote in 1963:

They commuted my sentence of execution to twenty years of hard labor, but, to be quite honest, I don't consider that to have been any favor to me. . . . I experienced those "mistakes," as it is now the style to call them, on my own skin and bones—and they were in no way any easier or better than those of Auschwitz or Majdanek. How is one supposed to distinguish dirt from truth? A murderer from an instructor? The law from lawlessness? An executioner from a patriot—when he moves upward, and from being a lieutenant becomes a lieutenant colonel, and the cockade he wears on his hat is very much like the one worn before 1917? . . . And how am I, emerging after eighteen years of imprisonment, supposed to decipher all the obfuscations? . . . I envy you educated people who have flexible minds and who do not have to spend a long time breaking your heads in order to figure out how you should proceed or how you should adapt, *which in fact I do not want to do.*

Well spoken indeed! "I do not want." With feelings like that on his release, can one say that he was corrupted? But was he then *corrected* in the state's sense? Of course not. For the state

he has simply been ruined. See what he has come to understand: This was no different from Auschwitz, and the cockades are no different either.

The "correction" which the state would like (?) is by and large never attained in the camps. The "graduates" of the camp learn only to be two-faced; how to *pretend* to be corrected, and they learn cynicism—toward the appeals of the state, the laws of the state, and its promises.

And what if there is nothing for a person *to be corrected of*? If he is not a criminal at all in the first place? If he has been imprisoned because he prayed to God, or expressed an independent opinion, or became a prisoner of war, or because of his father, or simply to fulfill the prisoner-arrest quota—what then could the camps give him?

The Sakhalin prison inspector said to Chekhov: "If, in the final analysis, out of a hundred hard-labor prisoners fifteen to twenty emerge as decent men, the responsibility for this result lies not so much with the corrective measures we employ as with our Russian courts, which send so many good reliable elements to hard labor."

Well, that judgment can stand for the Archipelago too, provided we increase the proportion of the innocently sentenced to, say, 80 percent, without at the same time forgetting that in our camps the percentage of spoilage was also considerably higher.

If we are speaking not about the meat grinder for unwanted millions, not about the cesspool into which they were hurled without pity for the people—but about a serious correctional system—the most complex of questions arises: How is it possible to give monotonously uniform punishments on the basis of a single, unified criminal code? After all, externally *equal* punishments for *different* individuals, some more moral and others more corrupted, some more sensitive and some more crude, some educated and some uneducated, are completely *unequal* punishments. (See Dostoyevsky in many different places in his *The House of the Dead*.)

English thought has understood this, and they say there (I don't know how much they practice it) that the punishment must fit not only the crime but also the character of each criminal.

For example, the general loss of external freedom for a person

with a rich inner world is less hard to bear than for a person who is immature, who lives more in terms of the flesh. This second person "requires more in terms of external impressions, and his instincts pull him more strongly in the direction of freedom." (Yakubovich.) The first finds it easier to be in solitary confinement, especially with books. (Ah, how some of us thirsted for that kind of imprisonment, instead of camp! When the body is confined, what broad horizons are opened to the mind and the soul! Nikolai Morozov did not seem in any way remarkable *either* before his arrest *or*, which is the more surprising, after it. But prison meditation provided him with the chance to conceive of the planetary structure of the atom—with its differentially charged nucleus and electrons—ten years before Rutherford! But we were never offered pencils, paper, and books, and even had every last one of them taken away from us.) The second kind of prisoner, on the other hand, might not be able to stand solitary confinement for even a year, and would simply wither away and die off. He would need someone, companions! And yet for the former kind of prisoner unpleasant company could be worse than no one. But camp (where they gave very little food) would be much easier for the latter to bear than for the former. As would a barracks where four hundred people were housed, all of them shouting, playing the fool, playing cards and dominoes, howling and snoring, and where, on top of all that, the radio, which was aimed at idiots, was constantly screeching away. (The camps in which I served time were *punished* by having no radio! What a salvation that was!)

Thus the system of Corrective Labor Camps in particular, with their obligatory and exhausting physical labor and their obligatory participation in the humiliating, buzzing ant heap, was a more effective means of destroying the intelligentsia than was prison. It was precisely the intelligentsia that this system killed off quickly and completely.

Our Muzzled Freedom

But even when all the main things about the Gulag Archipelago are written, read, and understood, will there be anyone even then who grasps what our *freedom* was like? What sort of a country it was that for whole decades dragged that Archipelago about inside itself?

It was my fate to carry inside me a tumor the size of a large man's fist. This tumor swelled and distorted my stomach, hindered my eating and sleeping, and I was always conscious of it (though it did not constitute even one-half of one percent of my body, whereas within the country as a whole the Archipelago constituted 8 percent). But the horrifying thing was not that this tumor pressed upon and displaced adjacent organs. What was most terrifying about it was that it exuded poisons and infected the whole body.

And in this same way our whole country was infected by the poisons of the Archipelago. And whether it will ever be able to get rid of them someday, only God knows.

Can we, *dare* we, describe the full loathsomeness of the state in which we lived (not so remote from that of today)? And if we do not show that loathsomeness in its entirety, then we at once have a lie. For this reason I consider that *literature did not exist* in our country in the thirties, forties, and fifties. Because without the *full* truth it is not literature. And today they show this loathsomeness according to the fashion of the moment—by inference, an inserted phrase, an afterthought, or hint—and the result is again a lie.

This is not the task of our book, but let us try to enumerate

briefly those traits of *free* life which were determined by the closeness of the Archipelago or which were in the same style.

1. *Constant Fear.* As the reader has already seen, the roster of the waves of recruitment into the Archipelago is not exhausted with 1935, or 1937, or 1949. The recruitment went on *all the time*. Just as there is no minute when people are not dying or being born, so there was no minute when people were not being arrested. Sometimes this came close to a person, sometimes it was further off; sometimes a person deceived himself into thinking that nothing threatened him, and sometimes he himself became an executioner, and thus the threat to him diminished. But any adult inhabitant of this country, from a collective farmer up to a member of the Politburo, always knew that it would take only one careless word or gesture and he would fly off irrevocably into the abyss.

Just as in the Archipelago beneath every trusty lay the chasm (and death) of general work, so beneath every inhabitant lay the chasm (and death) of the Archipelago. In appearance the country was much bigger than its Archipelago, but all of it and all its inhabitants hung phantomlike above the latter's gaping maw.

Fear was not always the fear of arrest. There were intermediate threats: purges, inspections, the completion of security questionnaires—routine or extraordinary ones—dismissal from work, deprivation of residence permit, expulsion or exile.¹ The security questionnaires were so detailed and so inquisitive that more than half the inhabitants of the country had a bad conscience and were constantly and permanently tormented by the approach of the period when they had to be filled out. Once people had invented a false life story for these questionnaires, they had to try not to get tangled up in it. But danger might strike suddenly: The son of the Kady Vlasov, Igor, regularly entered in his questionnaire the statement that his father was dead. And that way he got into a military school. Then one fine day he was summoned and he had three days to present a certificate of his father's death. And he had to do it!

1. In addition, there were such little-known forms as expulsion from the Party, dismissal from work, and dispatch to a camp as a free worker. That is how Stepan Grigoryevich Onchul was exiled in 1938. It was natural that such persons were listed as being very unreliable. During the war Onchul was conscripted into a work battalion, where he died.

The aggregate fear led to a correct consciousness of one's own insignificance and of the lack of any kind of *rights*. In November, 1938, Natasha Anichkova learned that the person she loved (her common-law husband) had been arrested in Orel. She went there. The enormous square in front of the prison was filled with carts. On them sat women in bast sandals, wearing their traditional peasant dress, with parcels which the authorities refused to accept. Anichkova pushed her way up to a window in a dreadful prison wall. "Who are you?" they asked her sternly. They heard her out. "Well, now, listen here, Comrade Muscoviite, I am going to give you one piece of *advice*: get out of here today, because at night *they are going to come for you too*." The foreigner finds all this quite incomprehensible: Why had the Chekist given her unsolicited advice instead of a businesslike answer to her question? What right did he have to demand of a free citizen that she leave immediately? And who was going *to come* and why? But what Soviet citizen will lie and say that this is incomprehensible to him or that it sounds like an improbable case? After advice like that you would be afraid to stay in a strange city!

Nadezhda Mandelstam* speaks truly when she remarks that our life is so permeated with prison that simple meaningful words like "they took," or "they put inside," or "he is inside," or "they let out," are understood by everyone in our country in only one sense, even without a context.

Peace of mind is something our citizens have never known.

2. *Servitude*. If it had been easy to change your place of residence, to leave a place that had become dangerous for you and thus shake off fear and refresh yourself, people would have behaved more boldly, and they might have taken some risks. But for long decades we were shackled by that same system under which no worker could quit work of his own accord. And the passport regulations also fastened everyone to particular places. And the housing, which could not be sold, nor exchanged, nor rented. And because of this it was an insane piece of daring *to protest* in the place where you lived or worked.

3. *Secrecy and Mistrust*. These feelings replaced our former openhearted cordiality and hospitality (which had still not been

destroyed in the twenties). These feelings were the natural defense of any family and every person, particularly because no one could ever quit work or leave, and every little detail was kept in sight and within earshot for years. The secretiveness of the Soviet person is by no means superfluous, but is absolutely necessary, even though to a foreigner it may at times seem superhuman. The former Tsarist officer K.U. survived and was never arrested only because when he got married he did not tell his wife about his past. His brother, N.U., was arrested—and the wife of the arrested man, taking advantage of the fact that they lived in different cities at the time of his arrest, hid his arrest from her own *father and mother*—so they would not blurt it out. She preferred telling them and everyone else that her husband had abandoned her, and then playing that role a long time! Now these were the secrets of one family which I was told thirty years later. And what urban family did not have such secrets?

In 1949 the father of a girl who was a fellow student of V.I.'s was arrested. In these cases everyone would shun such a student, and that was considered natural. But V.I. did not shun her, and openly expressed sympathy with the girl, and tried to find ways to help her out. Frightened by such unusual conduct, the girl rejected V.I.'s help and participation, and lied to him, saying she did not believe in the innocence of her arrested father, and that he had evidently concealed his crime from his family all his life. (And it was only during the times of Khrushchev that their tongues were loosened: the girl told him she had decided he was either a police informer or else a member of an anti-Soviet organization out to rope in the dissatisfied.)

This universal mutual mistrust had the effect of deepening the mass-grave pit of slavery. The moment someone began to speak up frankly, everyone stepped back and shunned him: "A provocation!" And therefore anyone who burst out with a sincere protest was predestined to loneliness and alienation.

4. *Universal Ignorance.* Hiding things from each other, and not trusting each other, we ourselves helped implement that *absolute secrecy*, absolute misinformation, among us which was *the cause of causes* of everything that took place—including both the millions of arrests and the mass approval of them also. Informing one another of nothing, neither shouting nor groaning,

and learning nothing from one another, we were completely in the hands of the newspapers and the official orators. Every day they pushed in our faces some new piece of incitement, like a photograph of a railroad wreck (sabotage) somewhere three thousand miles away. And what we really needed to learn about, which was what had happened on our apartment landing that day, we had no way of finding out.

How could you become a citizen, knowing nothing about life around you? Only when you yourself were caught in the trap would you find out—too late.

5. *Squealing* was developed to a mind-boggling extent. Hundreds of thousands of Security officers in their official offices, in the innocent rooms of official buildings, and in prearranged apartments, sparing neither paper nor their unoccupied time, tirelessly recruited and summoned stool pigeons to give reports, and this in such enormous numbers as they could never have found necessary for collecting information. They even recruited obviously useless and unsuitable people who would most certainly not agree to report to them—for example, a religious believer, the wife of the Baptist minister Nikitin, who had died in camp. Nonetheless, she was kept standing for several hours while being questioned, then was arrested, and then transferred to worse work at her factory. One of the purposes of such extensive recruitment was, evidently, to make each subject feel the breath of the stool pigeons on his own skin. So that in every group of people, in every office, in every apartment, either there would be an informer or else the people there would be afraid there was.

I will give my own superficial speculative estimate: Out of every four to five city dwellers there would most certainly be one who at least once in his life had received a proposal to become an informer. And it might even have been more widespread than that. Quite recently I carried out my own spot check, both among groups of ex-prisoners and among groups of those who have always been free. I asked which out of the group they had tried to recruit and when and how. And it turned out that out of several people at a table *all* had received such proposals at one time or another!

Nadezhda Mandelstam correctly concludes: Beyond the purpose of weakening ties between people, there was another purpose as well. Any person who had let himself be recruited would,

out of fear of public exposure, be very much interested in the continuing stability of the regime.

Secretiveness spread its cold tentacles throughout the whole people. It crept between colleagues at work, between old friends, students, soldiers, neighbors, children growing up—and even into the reception room of the NKVD, among the prisoners' wives bringing food parcels.

6. *Betrayal as a Form of Existence.* Given this constant fear over a period of many years—for oneself and one's family—a human being became a vassal of fear, subjected to it. And it turned out that the least dangerous form of existence was constant betrayal.

The mildest and at the same time most widespread form of betrayal was not to do anything bad directly, but just not to notice the doomed person next to one, not to help him, to turn away one's face, to shrink back. They had arrested a neighbor, your comrade at work, or even your close friend. You kept silence. You acted as if you had not noticed. (For you could not afford to lose your current job!) And then it was announced at work, at the general meeting, that the person who had disappeared the day before was . . . an inveterate enemy of the people. And you, who had bent your back beside him for twenty years at the same desk, now by your noble silence (or even by your condemning speech!), had to show how hostile you were to his crimes. (You had to make this sacrifice for the sake of your own dear family, for your own dear ones! What right had you not to think *about them?*) But the person arrested had left behind him a wife, a mother, children, and perhaps they at least ought to be helped? No, no, that would be dangerous: after all, these were the wife of an *enemy* and the mother of an enemy, and they were the children of an enemy (and your own children had a long education ahead of them)!

When they arrested engineer Palchinsky, his wife, Nina, wrote to Kropotkin's widow: "I have been left without any funds, and no one has given me any help, all shun me and fear me. . . . And I have found out what friends are now. There are very few exceptions."²

And one who concealed an enemy was also an enemy! And

2. A letter of August 16, 1929, manuscript section of the Lenin Library, collection 410, card file 5, storage unit 24.

one who abetted an enemy was also an enemy! And one who continued his friendship with an enemy was also an enemy. And the telephone of the accursed family fell silent. And they stopped getting letters. And on the street people passed them without recognizing them, without offering them a hand to shake, without nodding to them. And even less were they invited out. And no one offered to lend them money. And in the hustle of a big city people felt as if they were in a desert.

And that was precisely what Stalin needed! And he laughed in his mustaches, the shoeshine boy!

Academician Sergei Vavilov, after the repression of his great brother, became a lackey president of the Academy of Sciences. (That mustached prankster thought it all up too, to make a fool of him, and as a test for the human heart.) A. N. Tolstoi, a Soviet count, avoided not only visiting but even giving money to the family of his arrested brother. Leonid Leonov forbade his own wife, whose maiden name was Sabashnikova, to visit the family of her arrested brother, S. M. Sabashnikov.

And the legendary Georgi Dimitrov, that roaring lion of the Leipzig trial, retreated and declined to save and even betrayed his friends Popov and Tanev when they, who had been acquitted by a Fascist court, got sentenced to fifteen years each on Soviet soil "for the attempted assassination of Comrade Dimitrov." (And they served time in Kraslag.)

It is well known what the situation of an arrested man's family was like. V. Y. Kaveshan from Kaluga recalls it: "After the arrest of our father everyone avoided and shunned us, as if we were lepers, and I had to leave school because the *children tormented me*. [More betrayers were growing up! More executioners growing up!] And my mother was fired from her work. And we had to resort to begging."

One family of a Muscovite arrested in 1937—a mother and little children—was being taken to the railroad station by the police to be sent into exile. And all of a sudden, when they went through the station, the small boy, aged eight, disappeared. The policemen wore themselves out looking for him but couldn't find him. So they exiled the family without the boy. And what had happened was that he dived under the red cloth wound around the high pedestal beneath the bust of Stalin, and he sat there until the danger passed. And then he returned home—

where the apartment was sealed shut. He went to the neighbors, and to acquaintances, and to friends of his papa and mama—and not only did no one take that small boy into their family, but they refused even to let him spend the night! And so he went and turned himself in at an orphanage. . . . Contemporaries! Fellow citizens! Do you recognize here your own swinish faces?

But all that was only the minimal degree of betrayal—to turn one's back. But how many other alluring degrees there were—and what a multitude of people descended them! Those who fired Kaveshan's mother from work—did they not also turn their backs and make their own contribution? Those who harkened to the ring of the Security men and sent Nikitin's wife to manual labor, so that she would give in and become a stoolie all the sooner? Yes, and those editors who rushed to cross off the name of the writer who had been arrested the day before.

Marshal Blücher—he is a symbol of that epoch: he sat like an owl in the presidium of the court and judged Tukhachevsky. (And Tukhachevsky would have done the same to him.) They shot Tukhachevsky—and then they cut off Blücher's head too. Or what about the famous medical professors Vinogradov and Shereshevsky? Today we recall that they themselves were victims of the malevolent slander of 1952—but they themselves signed the no less malevolent slander against their colleagues Pletnev and Levin in 1936. (And the Great Laureate kept himself in training, both in theme and in individual souls. . . .)

People lived in the *field* of betrayal—and their best powers of reasoning were used in justification of it. In 1937 a husband and wife were awaiting arrest—because the wife had come from Poland. And here is what they agreed on: Before the actual arrest the husband denounced the wife to the police! She was arrested, and by the same token he was “purified” in the eyes of the NKVD and stayed free. And in that same glorious year, the prerevolutionary political prisoner Adolf Mezhev, going off to prison, proclaimed to his one and only beloved daughter, Izabella: “We have devoted our lives to Soviet power, and therefore let no one make use of your injury. Enter the Komsomol!” Under the terms of his sentence, Mezhev was not forbidden correspondence, but the Komsomol forbade his daughter to engage in any correspondence. And in the spirit of her father's testament the daughter renounced her father.

How many of those *renunciations* there were at that time! Some of them made in public, some of them in the press: "I, the undersigned, from such and such a date renounce my father and my mother as enemies of the Soviet people." And thus they purchased their lives.

Those who were not alive during that time, or who do not live today in China, will find it nearly impossible to comprehend and forgive this. In ordinary human societies the human being lives out his sixty years without ever getting caught in the pincers of that kind of choice, and he himself is quite convinced of his decency, as are those who pronounce speeches over his grave. A human being departs from life without ever having learned into what kind of deep well of evil one can fall.

And the mass mangle of souls does not spread through society instantly. During all the twenties and the beginning of the thirties many in our country still preserved their souls and the concepts of the former society: to help in misfortune, to defend those in difficulties. And even as late as 1933 Nikolai Vavilov and Meister openly petitioned on behalf of all the arrested staff members of the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Plant Breeding. There is a certain minimal necessary period of corruption prior to which the great Apparatus cannot cope with the people. This period is also determined by the age of those stubborn people who have not yet grown old. For Russia it took twenty years. When the Baltic States suffered mass arrests in 1949, their corruption had only had five or six years to establish itself, and that proved too little, and families that suffered from the government met with support on all sides. (Yes, and there was a supplementary cause there, strengthening the resistance of the Baltic peoples: social oppression there appeared simply as national oppression, and in this case people always fight back more firmly.)

In evaluating 1937 for the Archipelago, we refused it the title of the crowning glory. But here, in talking about *freedom*, we have to grant it this corroded crown of betrayal; one has to admit that this was the particular year that broke the soul of our *freedom* and opened it wide to corruption on a mass scale.

Yet even this was not yet the end of our society! (As we see today, the end never did come—the living thread of Russia survived, hung on until better times came in 1956, and it is now

less than ever likely to die.) The resistance was not overt. It did not beautify the epoch of the universal fall, but with its invisible warm veins its heart kept on beating, beating, beating, beating.

And in that awful time, when in apprehensive loneliness precious photographs, precious letters and diaries, were burned, when every yellowed piece of paper in the family cupboard all of a sudden gleamed out like a fiery fern of death and could not jump into the stove fast enough, in that awful time, what great heroism was required *not* to burn things up night after night for thousands and thousands of nights and to preserve the archives of those who had been sentenced (like Florensky) or of those who were well known to be in disgrace (like the philosopher Fyodorov)! And what a blazing, underground, anti-Soviet act of rebellion the story of Lidiya Chukovskaya, *Sofya Petrovna*,* must have seemed! It was preserved by Isidor Glikin. In blockaded Leningrad, feeling the approach of death, he made his way through the entire city to carry it to his sister and thus to save it.

Every act of resistance to the government required heroism quite out of proportion to the magnitude of the act. It was safer to keep dynamite during the rule of Alexander II than it was to shelter the orphan of an enemy of the people under Stalin. Nonetheless, how many such children were taken in and saved . . . Let the children themselves tell their stories. And secret assistance to families . . . did occur. And there was someone who took the place of an arrested person's wife who had been in a hopeless line for three days, so that she could go in to get warm and get some sleep. And there was also someone who went off with pounding heart to warn someone else that an ambush was waiting for him at his apartment and that he must not return there. And there was someone who gave a fugitive shelter, even though he himself did not sleep that night.

We have already mentioned those so bold as not to vote in favor of the Promparty executions. And there was also someone who went to the Archipelago for defending his unobtrusive, unknown colleagues at work. And sons followed in the footsteps of their fathers: the son of that Rozhansky,* Ivan, himself suffered in defense of his colleague Kopelev. At a Party meeting of the Leningrad Children's Publishing House, M. M. Maisner stood up and began to defend "wreckers in children's literature"—and right then and there he was expelled from the Party and

arrested. And, after all, he knew what he was doing.³ And in the wartime censorship office—in Ryazan in 1941—a girl censor tore up the criminal letter of a front-line soldier whom she did not know. But she was observed tearing it up and putting it into a wastebasket, and they pieced the letter back together—and *arrested* her. She sacrificed herself for a distant stranger! (And the only reason I heard about this was that it took place in Ryazan. And how many such cases were there unknown? . . .)

Nowadays it is quite convenient to declare that *arrest* was a lottery (Ehrenburg). Yes, it was a lottery all right, but some of the numbers were “fixed.” They threw out a general dragnet and arrested in accordance with assigned quota figures, yes, but every person who *objected publicly* they grabbed that very minute! And it turned into a *selection on the basis of soul*, not a lottery! Those who were bold fell beneath the ax, were sent off to the Archipelago—and the picture of the monotonously obedient *freedom* remained unruffled. All those who were purer and better could not stay in that society; and without them it kept getting more and more trashy. You would not notice these quiet departures at all. But they were, in fact, the dying of the soul of the people.

7. *Corruption.* In a situation of fear and betrayal over many years people survive unharmed only in a superficial, bodily sense. And inside . . . they become corrupt.

So many millions of people agreed to become stool pigeons. And, after all, if some forty to fifty million people served long sentences in the Archipelago during the course of the thirty-five years up to 1953, including those who died—and this is a modest estimate, being only three or four times the population of Gulag at any one time, and, after all, during the war the death rate there was running *one percent per day*—then we can assume that at least every third or at least every fifth case was the consequence of somebody’s denunciation and that somebody was willing to provide evidence as a witness! All of them, all those

3. There is evidence in our possession of a heroic case of mass steadfastness, but I require a second independent confirmation of it: in 1930 several hundred cadets of a certain Ukrainian military school arrived on Solovki in their own formation (refusing convoy)—because they had refused to suppress peasant disturbances.

murderers with ink, are still among us today. Some of them brought about the arrest of their neighbors out of fear—and this was only the first step. Others did it for material gain. And still others, the youngest at the time, who are now on the threshold of a pension, betrayed with inspiration, out of ideological considerations, and sometimes even openly; after all, it was considered a service to one's class to expose the enemy! And all these people are among us. And most often they are prospering. And we still rejoice that they are "our ordinary Soviet people."

Cancer of the soul develops secretly too and strikes at that particular part of it where one expects to find gratitude. Fyodor Peregud gave Misha Ivanov food and drink; Ivanov was out of work, and so Peregud got him a job at the Tambov railroad-car repair factory and taught him the trade. He had no place to live, so he let him move in with him, like a relative. And then Mikhail Dmitriyevich Ivanov sent a denunciation to the NKVD accusing Fyodor Peregud of praising German equipment at dinner at home. (You have to know Fyodor Peregud. He was a mechanic, a motor mechanic, a radio operator and repairman, an electrician, a watchmaker, an optician, a foundryman, a model-maker, a cabinetmaker, master of up to twenty different skills. In camp he opened up a shop for precision mechanics. When he lost his leg, he made himself an artificial limb.) And so the police came to take Peregud and took his fourteen-year-old daughter to prison too. And M. D. Ivanov was responsible for all that! He came to the trial looking black. And what that meant was that a rotting soul sometimes emerges in the face. But soon after, he left the factory and began to work for State Security in the open. And subsequently, because of his lack of ability, he was made a fireman.

In a corrupt society ingratitude was an everyday, run-of-the-mill emotion, and there was almost nothing surprising in it. After the arrest of the plant breeder V. S. Markin, the agronomist A. A. Solovyov quite safely stole the variety of wheat which Markin had developed, "Taiga 49."⁴ When the Institute of Buddhist Culture was destroyed (all its leading personnel were arrested) and its head, Academician Shcherbatsky, died, his

4. And when Markin was rehabilitated twenty years later, Solovyov was unwilling to yield him even *half* the payment he had received for it. *Izvestiya*, November 15, 1963.

student Kalyanov came to his widow and persuaded her to give him the books and papers of the deceased: "Otherwise things will go badly, because the Institute of Buddhist Culture turned out to be a spy center." Having taken possession of these works, he published part of them (as well as the work of Vostrikov) under his own name and thus acquired a reputation.

There are many scientific reputations in Moscow and in Leningrad that were also built on blood and bones. *The ingratitude of students*, cutting in a skewbald swath through our science and technology of the thirties and forties, had a quite understandable explanation: science passed out of the hands of the real scientists and engineers into the hands of the callow greedy *climbers*.

By now it is quite impossible to trace and enumerate all these appropriated works and stolen inventions. And what about the apartments taken over from those arrested? And what about their stolen possessions? And during the war did not this savage trait manifest itself as nearly universal: if there was someone bereaved, bombed out, their home burned down or being evacuated, the neighbors who had survived the disaster, plain Soviet people, tried in those very moments to profit from those who were stricken.

The aspects of corruption are varied; and it is not for us to cover them all in this chapter. The overall life of society came down to the fact that traitors were advanced and mediocrities triumphed, while everything that was best and most honest was trampled underfoot. Who can show me *one case* in the whole country from the thirties to the fifties of a noble person casting down, destroying, driving out a base troublemaker? I affirm that such a case would have been impossible, just as it is impossible for any waterfall to fall upward as an exception. After all, no noble person would turn to State Security, but for any villain it was always right there at hand. And State Security would not stop at anything, once it didn't stop at what it did to Nikolai Vavilov. So why should the waterfall fall upward?

This easy triumph of mean people over the noble boiled in a black stinking cloud in the crowded capital. But it stank, too, even way up north, beneath the honest Arctic storms, at the polar stations so beloved in the legends of the thirties, where the clear-eyed giants of Jack London should have been smoking

pipes of peace. At the Arctic station on Domashni Island, off Severnaya Zemlya, there were just three people: the non-Party chief of the station, Aleksandr Pavlovich Babich, a much-honored old Arctic explorer; the manual laborer Yeryomin, who was the only Party member and who was also the Party organizer (!) of the station; and the Komsomol member (the Komsomol organizer!), the meteorologist Goryachenko, who was ambitiously trying to shove the chief aside and take his job. Goryachenko dug around among the chief's personal possessions, stole documents, and made threats. The Jack London solution would have been for the other two men simply to shove this scoundrel down through the ice. But no! Instead, a telegram was sent to Papanin in the Northern Sea Route headquarters about the necessity of replacing this employee. The Party organizer Yeryomin signed the telegram, but then he confessed to the Komsomol member, and together they sent Papanin a Party-Komsomol telegram just the opposite in content. Papanin's decision was: The collective has disintegrated; remove them to the mainland. They sent the icebreaker *Sadko* to get them. On board the *Sadko* the Komsomol man lost no time at all and provided the ship's political commissar with *materials*. Babich was arrested on the spot. (The principal accusation was that he intended to turn the icebreaker *Sadko* over to the Germans—that same icebreaker on which they were all now sailing! . . .) Once ashore, Babich was immediately put into a Preliminary Detention Cell. (Let us imagine for one moment that the ship's commissar was an honest and reasonable person and that he had summoned Babich and heard the other side of the question. But this would have meant disclosing a secret denunciation to a possible enemy! And in that case Goryachenko, through Papanin, would have also procured the arrest of the ship's commissar. The system worked faultlessly!)

Of course, among individuals who had not been brought up from childhood in the Pioneer detachments and the Komsomol cells, there were souls that retained their integrity. At a Siberian station a husky soldier, seeing a trainload of prisoners, suddenly rushed off to buy several packs of cigarettes and persuaded the convoy guards to pass them on to the prisoners. (And in other places in this book we describe similar cases.) But this soldier was probably not on duty, and was probably on leave, and he

did not have the Komsomol organizer of his unit near him. If he had been on duty in his own unit, he would not have made up his mind to do it because he would have caught hell for it. Yes, and it was possible that even in the other situation the military police may have called him to account for it.

8. *The Lie as a Form of Existence.* Whether giving in to fear or influenced by material self-interest or envy, people can't nonetheless become stupid so swiftly. Their souls may be thoroughly muddled, but they still have a sufficiently clear mind. They cannot believe that all the genius of the world has suddenly concentrated itself in one head with a flattened, low-hanging forehead. They simply cannot believe the stupid and silly images of themselves which they hear over the radio, see in films, and read in the newspapers. Nothing forces them to speak the truth in reply, but no one allows them to keep silent! They have to *talk*! And what else but a lie? They have to applaud madly, and no one requires honesty of them.

And if in *Pravda* on May 20, 1938, we read the appeal of workers in higher education to Comrade Stalin:

Heightening our revolutionary vigilance, we will help our glorious intelligence service, headed by the true Leninist, the Stalinist People's Commissar Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, to purge our higher educational institutions as well as all our country of the remnants of the Trotskyite-Bukharinite and other counterrevolutionary trash . . .

we certainly do not conclude that the entire meeting of a thousand persons consisted solely of idiots—but merely of degenerate liars acceding to their own arrest on the morrow.

The permanent lie becomes the only safe form of existence, in the same way as betrayal. Every wag of the tongue can be overheard by someone, every facial expression observed by someone. Therefore every word, if it does not have to be a direct lie, is nonetheless obliged not to contradict the general, common lie. There exists a collection of ready-made phrases, of labels, a selection of ready-made lies. And not one single speech nor one single essay or article nor one single book—be it scientific, journalistic, critical, or "literary," so-called—can exist without the use of these primary clichés. In the most scientific of texts it is required that someone's false authority or false priority be

upheld somewhere, and that someone be cursed for telling the truth; without this lie even an academic work cannot see the light of day. And what can be said about those shrill meetings and trashy lunch-break gatherings where you are compelled to vote against your own opinion, to pretend to be glad over what distresses you (be it a new state loan, the lowering of piece rates, contributions to some tank column, Sunday work duties, or sending your children to help on the collective farms) and to express the deepest anger in areas about which you couldn't care less—some kind of intangible, invisible violence in the West Indies or Paraguay?

In prison Tenno recalled with shame how two weeks before his own arrest he had lectured the sailors on "The Stalinist Constitution—The Most Democratic in the World." And of course not one word of it was sincere.

There is no man who has typed even one page . . . without lying. There is no man who has spoken from a rostrum . . . without lying. There is no man who has spoken into a microphone . . . without lying.

But if only it had all ended there! After all, it went further than that: every conversation with the management, every conversation in the Personnel Section, every conversation of any kind with any other Soviet person called for lies—sometimes head on, sometimes looking over your shoulder, sometimes indulgently affirmative. And if your idiot interlocutor said to you face to face that we were retreating to the Volga in order to decoy Hitler farther, or that the Colorado beetles had been dropped on us by the Americans—it was necessary to agree! It was obligatory to agree! (And a shake of the head instead of a nod might well cost you resettlement in the Archipelago. Remember the arrest of Chulpenyov, in Part I, Chapter 7.)

But that was not all: Your children were growing up! If they weren't yet old enough, you and your wife had to avoid saying openly in front of them what you really thought; after all, they were being brought up to be Pavlik Morozovs, to betray their own parents, and they wouldn't hesitate to repeat his achievement. And if the children were still little, then you had to decide what was the best way to bring them up; whether to start them off on lies instead of the truth (so that it would be *easier* for them to live) and then to lie forevermore in front of them too; or to tell

them the truth, with the risk that they might make a slip, that they might let it out, which meant that you had to instill into them from the start that the truth was murderous, that beyond the threshold of the house you had to lie, only lie, just like papa and mama.

The choice was really such that you would rather not have any children.

The lie as the continuing basis of life: A young, intelligent woman, A.K., who understood everything, came from the capital to teach literature in a higher-education institute in the provinces. Her security questionnaire had no black marks on it, and she had a brand-new candidate's degree. In her principal course she saw she had only one Party member and decided that this girl was the one who was bound to be the stool pigeon. (There had to be a *stool pigeon* in every course—of that A.K. was convinced.) And so she decided to become all buddy-buddy with this Party member and pretend friendship with her. (Incidentally, according to the tactics of the Archipelago this was a complete miscalculation. What she should have done, on the contrary, was to paste a couple of failing grades on her at the start and then any denunciations would have looked like sour grapes.) And so these two used to meet outside the institute and exchanged photographs. (The girl student carried A.K.'s photograph around in her Party card case.) During holiday time they corresponded tenderly. And in every lecture A.K. tried to play up to the possible evaluations of her Party student. Four years of this humiliating pretense went by, the student completed her course, and by this time her conduct was a matter of indifference to A.K., so when she made her first return visit to the school, A.K. received her with deliberate coldness. The offended student demanded her photograph and letters back and exclaimed (the most dolefully amusing thing about it was that she probably wasn't a stool pigeon): "If I finish my degree, I will never cling to this pitiful institute the way you do! And what lectures you gave—as dull as dishwater!"

Yes, by impoverishing everything, bleaching it out, and clipping it to suit the perceptions of a stool pigeon, A.K. ruined her lectures, when she was capable of delivering them brilliantly.

As a certain poet said: It wasn't a cult of personality we had, but a cult of hypocrisy.

Here, too, of course, one has to distinguish between degrees:

between the forced, defensive lie and the oblivious, passionate lie of the sort our writers distinguished themselves at most of all, the sort of lie in the midst of whose tender emotion Marietta Shaginyan could write in 1937 (!) that the epoch of socialism had transformed even criminal interrogation: the stories of interrogators showed that nowadays the persons being interrogated *willingly cooperated with them*, telling everything that was required about themselves and others.

And the lie has, in fact, led us so far away from a normal society that you cannot even orient yourself any longer; in its dense, gray fog not even one pillar can be seen. All of a sudden, thanks to footnotes, you figure out that Yakubovich's book *In the World of the Outcasts* was published, although under a pseudonym, *at the very same time* the author was completing his Tsarist hard-labor sentence and being sent off into exile.⁵ Well, now, just add that up, just add that up and compare it with us! Compare that with the way my belated and shy novella managed to get out in the open by a miracle, and then they firmly lowered the barriers, bolted things up tightly, and locked the locks. And now it is forbidden to write not merely about something taking place in the present but even about things that took place thirty and fifty years ago. And will we ever read about them during our lifetime? We are destined to go to our graves still immersed in lies and falsehoods.

Moreover, even if they offered us the chance to learn the truth, would our *free people* even want to know it? Y. G. Oksman returned from the camps in 1948, and was not rearrested, but lived in Moscow. His friends and acquaintances did not abandon him, but helped him. But they did not want to hear his recollections of camp! Because if they knew about *that*—how could they go on living?

After the war a certain song became very popular: "The Noise of the City Cannot Be Heard." No singer, even the most mediocre, could perform it without receiving enthusiastic applause. The Chief Administration of Thoughts and Feelings did not at first grasp what was going on, and they allowed it to be performed on the radio and on the stage. After all, it was Russian and had a folk motif. And then suddenly they discovered what it was all

5. At the very time when that hard labor actually existed! It was about convict hard labor which was *contemporary with it*, and not allegedly in the irrevocable past.

about—and they immediately crossed it off the permitted list. The words of the song were about a doomed prisoner, about lovers torn apart. The need to repent existed still and it stirred, and people who were steeped in lies could at least applaud that old song with all their hearts.

9. *Cruelty*. And where among all the preceding qualities was there any place left for kindheartedness? How could one possibly preserve one's kindness while pushing away the hands of those who were drowning? Once you have been steeped in blood, you can only become more cruel. And, anyway, cruelty ("class cruelty") was praised and instilled, and you would soon lose track, probably, of just where between bad and good that trait lay. And when you add that kindness was ridiculed, that pity was ridiculed, that mercy was ridiculed—you'd never be able to chain all those who were drunk on blood!

My nameless woman correspondent, from Arbat No. 15, asks me "about the roots of the cruelty" characteristic of "certain Soviet people." Why is it that the cruelty they manifest is proportionate to the defenselessness of the person in their power? And she cites an example—which is not at all what one might regard as the main one, but which I am going to cite here anyway.

This took place in the winter of 1943–1944 at the Chelyabinsk railroad station, under a canopy near the baggage checkroom. It was minus 13 degrees. Beneath the shed roof was a cement floor, on which was trampled sticky snow from outside. Inside the window of the baggage checkroom stood a woman in a padded jacket, and on the nearer side was a well-fed policeman in a tanned sheepskin coat. They were absorbed in a kittenish, flirtatious conversation. Several men lay on the floor in earth-colored cotton duds and rags. Even to call them threadbare would be rank flattery. These were young fellows—emaciated, swollen, with sores on their lips. One of them, evidently in a fever, lay with bare chest on the snow, groaning. The woman telling the story approached him to ask who they were, and it turned out that one of them had served out his term in camp, another had been released for illness, but that their documents had been made out incorrectly when they were released, and as a result they could not get tickets to go home on the train. And they had no strength left to return to camp either—they were totally fagged out with diarrhea. So then the woman telling the story began to

break off pieces of bread for them. And at this point the policeman broke off his jolly conversation and said to her threateningly: "What's going on, auntie, have you recognized your relatives? You better get out of here. They will die without your help!" And so she thought to herself: After all, they'll up and haul me in just like that and put me in prison! -(And that was quite right, what was to stop them?) And . . . she went away.

How typical all this is of our society—what she thought to herself, and how she went away, and that pitiless policeman, and that pitiless woman in the padded jacket, and that cashier at the ticket window who refused them tickets, and that nurse who refused to take them into the city hospital, and that idiotic free employee at the camp who had made out their documents.

It was a fierce and a vicious life, and by this time, you would not, as in Dostoyevsky and Chekhov, call a prisoner "an unfortunate," but, if you please, only "rot." In 1938 Magadan school pupils threw stones at a column of women prisoners (as Surpvtseva recalls).

Had our country ever known before, or does any other country know today, so many repulsive and divisive apartment and family quarrels? Every reader will be able to speak of many, and we will mention just one or two.

In a communal apartment on Dolomanovskaya Street in Rostov lived Vera Krasutskaya, whose husband was arrested and perished in 1938. Her neighbor, Anna Stolberg, knew about this, and for eighteen years—from 1938 to 1956—reveled in her power and tormented Krasutskaya with threats; catching her in the kitchen or in the corridor, she would hiss at Krasutskaya: "If I say so, you can go on living, but I only have to say the word and the *Black Maria* will come for you." And it was only in 1956 that Krasutskaya decided to write a complaint to the prosecutor. And Stolberg then shut up. But they continued to live together in the same apartment.

After the arrest of Nikolai Yakovlevich Semyonov in 1950 in the city of Lyubim, his wife, that very winter, kicked out his mother, Mariya Ilinichna Semyonova, who had been living with them: "Get out of here, you old witch! Your son is an enemy of the people!" (Six years later, when her husband returned from camp, she and her grown-up daughter, Nadya, drove him out into the street at night in his underpants. Nadya was so eager to do this because she needed the space for *her own* husband. And

when she threw his trousers in her father's face, she shouted at him: "Get out of here, you old rat!")⁶ When Semyonov's mother was kicked out of that apartment, she went to her childless daughter Anna in Yaroslavl. Soon the mother got on her daughter's and her son-in-law's nerves. And her son-in-law, Vasily Fyodorovich Metyolkin, a fireman, on his off-duty days, used to take his mother-in-law's face in the palms of his hands, hold it tight so she couldn't turn away from him, and amuse himself by spitting in her face till he had no spit left, trying to hit her in the eyes and mouth. And when he was really angry, he would take out his penis and shove it in the old woman's face: "Take it, suck it, and die!" His wife explained his conduct to her brother when he returned: "Well, what can I do when Vasya is drunk? . . . What can you expect from a drunk?" And then, in order to get a new apartment ("We need a bathroom because there is no place to wash our old mother and we certainly can't drive her out to a public bath"), they began to treat her tolerably well. And when—"because of her"—they had got a new apartment, they packed the rooms with chests of drawers and sideboards, and pushed her into a cranny between the wardrobe and the wall fourteen inches wide—and told her to lie there and not stick her head out. And N. Y. Semyonov himself, who was by then living with his son, took the risk, without asking his son, of bringing his mother home. The grandson came home. The grandmother sank down on her knees before him: "Vovochka, you're not going to kick me out?" And the grandson grimaced: "Oh, all right, live here until I get married." And it is quite apropos to add in regard to that same granddaughter Nadya—Nadezhda Nikolayevna Topnikova—that around this time she completed the course in the historical and philological faculty of the Yaroslavl Pedagogical Institute, entered the Party, and became an editor of the district newspaper in the city of Neya in Kostroma Province. She was a poetess as well, and in 1961, while she was still in Lyubim, she rationalized her conduct in verse:

If you're going to fight, then really fight!
Your father!? Give it to him in the neck!

6. V. I. Zhukov recounts an exactly similar story from Kovrov: his wife drove him out ("Get out, or I will have you jailed again!"), as did his stepdaughter ("Get out, jailbird!").

Morals!! People dreamed them up!
I don't want to hear of them!
In my life I'll march ahead
Solely with cold calculation!

But her Party organization began to demand that she "normalize" her relationship with her father, and she suddenly began to write to him. Overjoyed, the father replied with an all-forgiving letter, which she immediately ran to show her Party organization. And when they saw it, they put a check mark opposite her name, and that was that. And since then all he gets from her are greetings on the great May and November holidays.

Seven people were involved in this tragedy. And so there you have one little droplet of our *freedom*.

In better-brought-up families, they do not chase a relative who has suffered unjustly out onto the street in his underwear, but they are ashamed of him, and they feel burdened and imposed upon by his bitterly "distorted" world outlook.

And one could go on enumerating further. One could name in addition:

10. *Slave Psychology*. That same unfortunate Babich in his declaration to the prosecutor: "I understand that wartime placed more serious obligations and duties on the organs of government than to sort out the charges against individual persons."

And much else.

But let us admit: if under Stalin this whole scheme of things did not just come into being *on its own*—and if, instead, he himself worked it all out for us point by point—he really was a genius!



So there in that stinking damp world in which only executioners and the most blatant of betrayers flourished, where those who remained honest became drunkards, since they had no strength of will for anything else, in which the bodies of young people were bronzed by the sun while their souls putrefied inside, in which every night the gray-green hand reached out and collared someone in order to pop him into a box—in that world millions

of women wandered about lost and blinded, whose husbands, sons, or fathers had been torn from them and dispatched to the Archipelago. They were the most scared of all. They feared shiny nameplates, office doors, telephone rings, knocks on the door, the postman, the milkwoman, and the plumber. And everyone in whose path they stood drove them from their apartments, from their work, and from the city.

Sometimes they trustingly based their hopes on the belief that a sentence "without the right of correspondence" was to be understood as meaning just that, and that when ten years had passed, *he* would write.⁷ They stood in line outside prisons. They went distances of fifty miles and more to places where, they had heard, food parcels were accepted for mailing. Sometimes they themselves died before the death of their relative in prison. Sometimes they learned the date of death only from the notation on a food parcel that had been returned, which read: "Addressee died in hospital." Sometimes, as in the case of Olga Chavchavadze, who got to Siberia, carrying to her husband's grave a handful of the soil of his native land, they arrived on such a mission only to find that no one could tell them which mound he lay under together with three other corpses. Sometimes, as in the case of Zelma Zhugur, they kept on writing letters to be delivered by hand to some Voroshilov or other, forgetting that Voroshilov's conscience had died long before he died himself.⁸

And these women had children who grew up, and for each one there came a time of extreme need when they absolutely had to have their father back, before it was too late, but he never came.

A little folded triangle of school notebook paper with crooked handwriting. Red and blue pencils in turn, one after the other—in all probability a childish hand had put aside one pencil, rested, and then taken up a new one. Angular, inexperienced, tortuously written letters with breathing spaces between them and sometimes even within words:

Hello Papa I forgot how to write soon in School I will go through the first winter come quickly because it's bad we have no Papa mama

7. Sometimes there really were camps without the right of correspondence; not only the atomic factories of the period from 1945 to 1949, but also, for example, Camp 29 of Karlag allowed no correspondence at all for a year and a half.

8. He did not even have the courage to shield his closest adjutant, Langovoi, from arrest and torture.

says you are away on work or sick and what are you waiting for run away from that hospital here Olyeshka ran away from hospital just in his shirt mama will sew you new pants and I will give you my belt all the same the boys are all afraid of me, and Olyeshenka is the only one I never beat up he also tells the truth he is also poor and I once lay in fever and wanted to die along with mother and she did not want to and I did not want to, oh, my hand is numb from write thats enough I kiss you lots of times

Igoryok 6 and one half years

I already know how to write on envelopes and before mother comes from work I will drop the letter in the mailbox.

Manolis Glezos, "in a clear and passionate speech," told Moscow writers about his comrades languishing in the prisons of Greece.

"I understand that I have made your hearts tremble by my passionate speech. But I did it intentionally. I would like to have your hearts ache for those languishing in imprisonment. . . . Raise your voice for the liberation of the Greek Patriots."

And those well-worn foxes—of course, they raised their voices! After all, a couple of dozen prisoners were languishing in Greece! And maybe Manolis himself did not understand the shamelessness of his appeal, and maybe, too, in Greece they do not have the proverb: "Why grieve for others when there is sobbing at home?"

In various parts of our country we find a certain piece of sculpture: a plaster guard with a police dog which is straining forward in order to sink its teeth into someone. In Tashkent there is one right in front of the NKVD school, and in Ryazan it is like a symbol of the city, the one and only monument to be seen if you approach from the direction of Mikhailov.

And we do not even shudder in revulsion. We have become accustomed to these figures setting dogs onto people as if they were the most natural things in the world.

Setting the dogs onto us.



Several Individual Stories

I have fragmented the fates of all the prisoners I have previously mentioned in this book, subordinating their stories to the plan of the book—to the contours of the Archipelago. I have steered away from biographical accounts; it would have been too monotonous, it's how they write and write, shifting all the burden of inquiry off the author's shoulders onto the reader's.

But precisely because of this I consider that at this point I have the right to cite several prisoners' stories in their entirety.

1. Anna Petrovna Skripnikova

The only daughter of an ordinary worker of Maikop, Anna Skripnikova was born in 1896. As we already know from the history of the Party, under the cursed Tsarist regime all paths to an education were closed to her, and she was condemned to the half-starving life of a female slave. And all this really did happen to her—but after the Revolution. At the time she was accepted in the Maikop gymnasium.

Anna grew up to become a big girl who also had a large head. A girl who was her gymnasium friend made a drawing of her which consisted solely of circles: her head was round (from all angles), she had a round forehead and round eyes which somehow expressed eternal perplexity. The lobes of her ears rounded off as they grew into her cheeks. And her shoulders were round. And her figure was a sphere.

Anna began to think about things too soon in life. As early as the third grade she asked her teacher's permission to take

Dobrolyubov and Dostoyevsky from the gymnasium library. The teacher was indignant: "It's too soon for you!" "All right, if you don't let me read them here, I'll get them in the city library." At the age of thirteen "she emancipated herself from God," and ceased to be a believer. At the age of fifteen she pored over the Church fathers—exclusively for the purpose of furiously refuting the priest in class—to the general satisfaction of her fellow students. However, she herself adopted the steadfastness of the Russian Church schismatics as her highest model. She learned: It is better to die than to permit one's spiritual core to be broken.

No one interfered with her receiving the gold medal she deservedly won.¹ In 1917 (what a time for study!) she went to Moscow and entered Chaplygin's Advanced School for Women in the department of philosophy and psychology. As a gold medalist she was paid, till the October coup, a State Duma scholarship. This department prepared teachers of logic and psychology for the gymnasiums. Throughout 1918, earning money by giving lessons, she studied psychoanalysis. She apparently remained an atheist, but she felt with her whole soul how

... immovably on the fiery roses
The living altar of creation smokes.

She managed to pay her dues to the poetical philosophy of Giordano Bruno and of Tyutchev and even at one time considered herself an Eastern Catholic. She changed faiths greedily, perhaps more often than her dresses. (There were no dresses, and she did not pay all that much attention to them anyway.) And, in addition, at the beginning she considered herself a socialist and that the blood of revolt and civil war was inevitable. But she could not reconcile herself to terror. Democracy, but not atrocities! "Let hands be steeped in blood, but not in mud!"

At the end of 1918 she had to leave the school. (And did the school exist any longer anyway?) With great difficulty she managed to make her way to her parents, where the food situation was better. She arrived in Maikop. An Institute of People's Education for adults and for young people had already been created there. Anna became no more and no less than an acting professor of logic, philosophy, and psychology. She was popular with the students.

1. But what if a schoolgirl challenged the basis of Marxism that way today?

During this period the Whites were living out their last days in Maikop. A forty-five-year-old general tried to persuade her to flee with him. "General, call off the show! Escape before you are arrested!" In those days, at a party for teachers, among themselves, a gymnasium history teacher proposed a toast: "To the great Red Army!" Anna rejected the toast: "Not for anything!" Knowing her leftist views, her friends' eyes popped out. "Because . . . notwithstanding the eternal stars . . . there will be more and more executions," she prophesied.

She had the feeling that all the best people were perishing in this war and only the opportunists were surviving. She already had a presentiment that her great moment was approaching, but she still did not know . . . what it would be.

Several days later the Reds entered Maikop. And a little later a meeting of the city intelligentsia was assembled. The chief of the Special Section of the Fifth Army, Losev, came out on the stage and, in a menacing tone, not far from cursing, began to abuse the "rotten intelligentsia": "What? Sitting on the fence, were you? Waiting for me to invite you? Why didn't you come on your own?" Getting wilder and wilder, he pulled his revolver out of its holster and, brandishing it, screamed: "Your whole culture is rotten! We are going to destroy it and build a new one. And if any of you interfere—we will eliminate you!"² And after that he proposed: "Who wants to speak?"

The hall was as silent as the grave. There was not one single bit of applause, and no hand was lifted. (The hall was silent because it was frightened, but the fright was not yet rehearsed; and people did not know that it was compulsory for them to applaud.)

In all probability Losev did not think that anyone would rise to speak, but Anna stood up. "I." "You?" said he rudely. "Well, climb up here, climb up." And she walked the length of the hall and mounted the stage. A big woman, with a big face, even with rosy cheeks, this twenty-five-year-old woman was of the generous Russian type (she got only an eighth of a pound of bread, but her father had a good garden). Thick auburn braids reached to her knees, but as an active professor she could not go around with them like that and had them twisted on top of her

2. Whoever has read Krylenko's speeches in Part I, Chapter 8, already knows all about this.

head, giving herself a second head. And she replied resoundingly:

"We have heard out your ignorant speech. You summoned us here, but it was not announced that it was to bury the great culture of Russia! We came here expecting to see a culture-bearer and found a gravedigger. You would have done better simply to curse us out than to say what you did today! And so are we supposed to understand that you speak in the name of Soviet power?"

"Yes," the already taken aback Losev nonetheless affirmed proudly.

"Well, if the Soviet government is going to have such bandits as you as its representatives, it will fall apart."

Anna had finished, and the whole hall applauded ringingly. (Being all together, they were not yet afraid.) And the evening came to an end on that note. Losev found nothing else to say. People came up to Anna, pressed her hand in the thick of the crowd, and whispered: "You are done for. They are going to arrest you right away, but thank you, thank you! We are proud of you, but you . . . are done for! What have you done?"

At home the Chekists were waiting for her. "Comrade teacher! How poorly you live—a desk, two chairs, and a cot—there's nothing to search. We have never arrested someone like you before. And your father is a worker. How is it that being so poor you could go over to the side of the bourgeoisie?" The Cheka had not yet got itself organized, and they brought Anna to a room in the chancellery of the Special Branch where the White Guard Colonel Baron Bilderling was already under arrest. (Anna witnessed his interrogation and his execution, and later on she went and told his widow: "He died honorably, be proud!")

They took her for questioning to the room where Losev was living and working. When she entered, he was sitting on his stripped bed in his field britches and an unbuttoned undershirt, scratching his chest. Anna immediately demanded of the guard: "Take me out of here!" Losev growled: "All right, I'll wash up and put on those kid gloves in which people make the Revolution."

For one week she awaited her death sentence in a state of ecstasy. Skripnikova now recalls this as the brightest week of her life. If these words are to be understood in their precise meaning, we can believe them completely. That is the kind of ecstasy which descends upon the soul as a reward when you have cast aside all

hopes for impossible salvation and have steadfastly given yourself over to a great deed. (Love of life destroys this ecstasy.)

She did not yet know that the city intellectuals had delivered a petition asking that she be pardoned. (At the end of the twenties this would not have been of any help. And in the beginning of the thirties no one would have been willing to sign.) Losev began to take a conciliatory line in interrogating her:

"In all the cities I have captured, I have never met anyone as mad as you. The city is in a state of siege, and all power here is in my hands, and you called me—a gravedigger of Russian culture! Well, all right, we both lost our tempers. . . . Take back 'bandit' and 'hooligan.'"

"No. I still think the same about you."

"They keep coming to me from morning to night to ask for you. In the name of the honeymoon of Soviet power I am going to have to let you out. . . ."

They let her out. Not because they considered her speech harmless, but because she was a worker's daughter. They would not have forgiven a doctor's daughter that.³

That is how Skripnikova began her journey through prisons.

In 1922 she was held in the Krasnodar Cheka, confined there for eight months "for acquaintance with a suspicious individual." There was epidemic typhus and great congestion in that prison. They gave a bread ration amounting to somewhat less than two ounces per day, made from additives too. In her presence a child died in the arms of the woman sitting next to her. And Anna took an oath never to have a child under such socialism as this, never to let herself be tempted by motherhood.

She kept this oath. She lived out her life without a family, and her fate, her unwillingness to compromise, provided her more than once with the chance to return to prison.

Then began what was supposed to be a peaceful life. In 1923 Skripnikova went to enter the Institute of Psychology at Moscow State University. In filling out the security questionnaire, she wrote: "Not a Marxist." Out of kindness of heart her interviewers advised her: "Are you crazy? Who writes answers like that? State that you're a Marxist, and think whatever you please." "But I have no wish to deceive the Soviet government. I have simply never read Marx. . . ." "Well, all the more so in that case."

3. In 1920 Losev himself was shot for banditry and violence in the Crimea.

"No. When I get around to studying Marxism and *if* I accept it . . ." And for the time being she took a job teaching in a school for defectives.

In 1925 the husband of her close friend, an SR, fled to escape arrest. In order to force him to return, the GPU seized as hostages (in the midst of the NEP—hostages?) his wife and her friend, that is, Anna. She was just exactly the same round-faced, big-built woman with tresses that reached down to her knees when she entered her cell in the Lubyanka. (This is where the interrogator assured her: "All those flourishes of the Russian intelligentsia are out of date! *Just look after yourself.*") This time she was imprisoned about a month.

In 1927, for participating in a musical society of teachers and workers, doomed to be destroyed as a possible nest of freethinking, Anna was arrested for what was by then the *fourth* time. She got five years and served them out on Solovki and the Belomor Canal.

From 1932 on they did not touch her again for a long time, yes, and evidently she lived more carefully. Beginning with 1948, however, they began to fire her from her jobs. In 1952 the Institute of Psychology returned to her her already accepted dissertation ("The Psychological Conception of Dobrolyubov") on the grounds of her having received in 1927 a sentence based on Article 58! In this difficult time (she was already in her fourth year of unemployment) a hand reached out to help her from . . . State Security! Lisov, a representative of the central State Security apparatus (well, now, here is Losev again! Was he alive? How little had changed even in the letters! Just that he did not stick up his head openly, like an elk—"los"—but sniffed and darted like a fox—"lisa"), who had arrived in Vladikavkaz, proposed that she *collaborate*, in return for which work would be arranged for her and she would be allowed to defend her dissertation. Proudly she turned him down. Then they nimbly cooked up a charge that eleven years earlier (!), in 1941, she had said:

- that we had been poorly prepared for the war (and had we been well prepared?);
- that the German armies were deployed along our borders, and that we were sending them grain (and were we not?).

And on this occasion she got ten years and landed in the Special Camps, first Dubrovlag in Mordvinia, then Kamyshlag at Suslovo Station in Kemerovo Province.

Sensing that impenetrable wall in front of her, she thought up the idea of writing petitions not just anywhere, but . . . to the United Nations! During Stalin's lifetime she sent off three of them. This was not just some sort of trick—not at all! She actually, genuinely eased her eternally bubbling soul by speaking in her mind's eye with the UN. She actually, during these decades of cannibalism, had seen no other light in the world. In these petitions she lashed out at the savage tyranny in the Soviet Union and asked the UN to intervene with the Soviet government and request it either to reinvestigate her case or else to have her executed, since she could no longer go on living under this terror. She would address the envelopes "personally" to one or another of the Soviet leaders, and inside lay the request that it be sent on to the UN.

In Dubrovlag she was summoned by a clique of the infuriated bosses: "How dare you write to the UN?"

Skripnikova stood there, as always, erect, large, majestic: "Neither in the Criminal Code nor in the Code of Criminal Procedure nor in the Constitution itself is it forbidden. And you ought not to have opened envelopes addressed personally to members of the government!"

In 1956 an "unloading" commission of the Supreme Soviet was functioning in their camp. The only task of this commission was to free as many zeks as possible as quickly as possible. There was a certain modest procedure, which consisted in having the zek say several apologetic words and stand there a bit with drooping head. But no, Anna Skripnikova was not that kind! Her own personal release was nothing in comparison with common justice! How could she accept forgiveness if she was innocent? And she declared to the commission:

"Don't be so overjoyed! All accessories to Stalin's terror are going to have to answer to the people sooner or later. I do not know whom you were personally under Stalin, Citizen Colonel, but if you were an accessory to his terror, then you, too, are going to be sitting on the defendant's bench."

The members of the commission gulped in fury, shouted that

she was insulting the Supreme Soviet in their persons, that this would cost her plenty, and that she would just go on serving time from one toll of the gong to the next.

And in actual fact, because of her vain faith in justice, she had to serve three extra years.

From Kamyshlag she sometimes continued to write to the UN. (In seven years, up to 1959, she wrote a total of eighty petitions to various institutions.) In 1958, because of these letters, she was sent for one year to the Vladimir Political Prison. And there they had a rule: once in every ten days they would accept a petition directed to any authority. During a half-year she sent eighteen declarations from there to different institutions—including twelve to the UN.

And she got her way in the end. She got . . . not execution but a re-examination of her case—the cases of 1927 and of 1952. She said to the interrogator: “Well, what do you want? A petition to the UN is the only means of knocking a hole in the wall of Soviet bureaucracy and compelling the deaf Themis at least to hear something.”

The interrogator jumped up and beat his breast: “All the accessories to the ‘Stalinist terror’—as you for some reason [!] call the personality cult—will answer to the people? And what am *I* to answer for? What other policy could I execute at that time? Yes, I believed Stalin without any doubts and I did not know anything.”

But Skripnikova kept hitting away at him: “No, no, you can’t get away with that! One has to bear the responsibility for every crime! Who is supposed to answer for the deaths of millions of innocents? For the flower of the nation and the flower of the Party? The dead Stalin? The executed Beria? While you pursue your political career?”

(Her own blood pressure at this moment was rising to the danger point, she shut her eyes, and everything whirled and flamed.)

And they would still have detained her, but in 1959 a case of this sort was a real curiosity.

And in the years that followed—and she is alive right now—her life has been filled with solicitations on behalf of those still imprisoned or in exile, and those whose sentences still remain on the records—those whom she met in camps in recent

years. She got several of them released. She got others rehabilitated. She has also undertaken the defense of those who live in her own city. The city authorities are afraid of her pen and the envelopes she sends off to Moscow, and in some degree they make concessions to her.

And if everyone were even one-quarter as implacable as Anna Skripnikova—the history of Russia would be different.

2. Stepan Vasilyevich Loshchilin

He was born in 1908 in the Volga region, the son of a worker at the paper factory. In 1921, during the famine, he was orphaned. He grew up to be a lad who was not very bold, and nevertheless at the age of seventeen he was already a member of the Komsomol, and at the age of eighteen he entered a school for peasant youth, and completed it at the age of twenty-one. At this time they were sent out to help in compulsory exactions of breadgrains, and in 1930 in his own native village he participated in the liquidation of the kulaks. He did not remain behind, however, to build the collective farm there, but “got a reference” from the village soviet and with it went off to Moscow. He had difficulty in finding a job . . . as a manual laborer at a construction project. (This was a period of unemployment, and people were swarming into Moscow especially at this time.) A year later he was called up into the army, and there he was accepted as a candidate member and later as a full member of the Party. At the end of 1932 he was demobilized and returned to Moscow. However, he did not wish to be a manual laborer and he wanted to acquire a skill, so he asked the district committee of the Party to assign him as an apprentice at a factory. But evidently he was a pretty incompetent sort of Communist because they turned down even this request, and instead offered him an assignment to the police.

And at this point—he refused. Had he taken a different turn, this biography wouldn't have been written. But this he refused.

As a young fellow he was ashamed to admit to the girls that he was only a manual laborer, that he had no profession. But there was nowhere he could get that profession! And he went to work at the “Kalibr” factory, once more as a manual laborer. At a Party meeting there he naïvely spoke out in defense of a

worker whom the Party bureau had evidently marked down ahead of time for purging. They purged that particular worker just as they had planned, and they began to move in on Loshchilin. The Party dues he had collected from others were stolen from his barracks—and he was unable to make up the missing ninety-three rubles out of his own wages. At that point they expelled him from the Party and threatened to prosecute him. (Does the loss of Party dues really come under the terms of the Criminal Code?) Already in a state of depression, Loshchilin did not appear at work one day. He was fired for absenteeism. With a reference like that he could not get work anywhere for a long, long time. An interrogator kept after him for a while and then left him alone. He kept expecting a trial—but there was none. And suddenly a verdict in absentia was handed down against him: six months of forced labor with a fine of 25 percent of his pay, to be served through the municipal Bureau of Corrective Labor (the BITR).

In September, 1937, Loshchilin went to the buffet at the Kiev Station. (What do we know of our lives? What if he had just gone hungry for another fifteen minutes and gone to a buffet in a different place? . . .) Perhaps he had some sort of lost or seeking expression on his face? He himself does not know. A young woman in the uniform of the NKVD came toward him. (Is that the kind of thing you ought to be doing, woman?) She asked him: "What are you looking for? Where are you going?" "To the buffet." She pointed to a door: "Go on in there." Loshchilin, of course, obeyed her. (She should have spoken like that to an Englishman!) This was the office of the Special Branch. An official sat behind the desk. The woman said: "Detained during tour of the station." And she went out, and never in his life did Loshchilin see her again. (And we, too, will never learn anything about her! . . .) The official, without offering him a seat, began to question him. He took all his documents away from him and sent him to a room for detained persons. There were two men there already, and, as Loshchilin himself relates, "this time without permission [!] I sat down next to them on an unoccupied chair." All three kept silent for a long time. Policemen came and led them off to Cells for Preliminary Detention. A policeman ordered them to turn over their money to him, because, allegedly, in the cell "it would

be taken from them anyway." (What a remarkable identity there is between the police and the thieves!) Loshchilin lied, saying that he had no money. They began to search him, and they took away his money once and for all. And gave him back his makhorka. With two packets of makhorka he entered his first cell, and put the makhorka on the table. No one else, of course, had anything to smoke.

They took him just once from the Cell for Preliminary Detention to the interrogator, who asked him whether he was a thief. (And what a rescue that would have been for him! He should have said then and there that, yes, he was a thief but never caught. And the worst that would have happened to him would have been to be sent out of Moscow.) But Loshchilin replied proudly: "I live by my own labor." And the interrogator directed no other charges at him, and the interrogation came to an end with that, and there was no trial!

He was imprisoned in the Cell for Preliminary Detention for ten days, and then at night they took them all to the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department on Petrovka Street. Here things were crowded and stifling, and it was impossible to get through. The thieves were the rulers here. They took things away from the prisoners and lost them at cards. Here for the first time Loshchilin was astonished by "their strange boldness, their insistence on some kind of incomprehensible superiority." One night the authorities began to haul them all off to the transit prison on Sretenka (that was where it was before Krasnaya Presnya). And there it was even more crowded. People sat on the floor and took turns on the bunks. To those who were only half-clothed—left in this state by the thieves—the police issued clothing—bast sandals and old police uniforms.

Among those sent there with Loshchilin were many others who also *had never been formally charged with anything*, never called to court or tried—but they were transported just like those who had been sentenced. They took them to Perebory, where they filled out an invoice for those who had arrived, and it was only when he got there that Loshchilin found his section: SVE—Socially Harmful Element, sentence four years. (To this very day he is in a state of dismay: After all, my father was a worker, and I myself am a worker, and why then was I an SVE? *It would have been a different matter* if I had been a trader. . . .)

Volgograd. Logging. A ten-hour workday and no days off except the November and May holidays. (And this was *three* whole years before the war!) And once Loshchilin broke his leg and had an operation and spent four months in the hospital and three on crutches. And then he was again sent to logging. And so it was that he served out his four-year term. The war began, but nonetheless he was not considered a 58, and in the autumn of 1941 he was released. Just before being released Loshchilin had his pea jacket stolen, but it was registered on his equipment card. And how he begged the trustees to write off that cursed pea jacket—but no! They refused to take pity on him! They took the cost of the pea jacket out of his “release fund”—double the cost, in fact! And the government inventory prices for those torn cotton-padded treasures were very dear. And so on a cold autumn day they let him out of the camp gates in a cotton camp shirt, with scarcely any money, or any bread or even a herring for the road. The gatehouse guards searched him at the exit and wished him good speed.

And so he was plundered on the day of his release, just as he had been on the day of his arrest.

When the documents were being written up in the office of the chief of the Classification and Records Section, Loshchilin managed to read upside down what was written in his *file*. What was written was: “Detained during tour of station . . .”

He arrived in the city of Sursk, his native area. Because he was ill the district military conscription commissariat exempted him from military service. And that, too, turned out to be bad. In the autumn of 1942, under Order No. 336 of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the district military commissariat conscripted all men of call-up age who could perform physical labor. Loshchilin landed in the *labor detachment* of the Apartment Maintenance Section of the Ulyanovsk garrison. What kind of detachment this was and what the attitude toward it was can be judged from the fact that it contained many young men from the West Ukraine, whom they had managed to conscript before the war, but who had not been sent to the front because they were unreliable. And so Loshchilin landed in another variety of the Archipelago again, a militarized unguarded camp geared to accomplish the same kind of annihilation as other camps—through exhausting the inmates' last strength.

A ten-hour workday. In the barracks two-story bunks without any bedding. (When they went out to work, the barracks was deserted.) They worked and went around in whatever of their own they had when they were taken from their homes and in their own underwear, without baths and without a change. They were paid a reduced wage, from which they were charged for bread (twenty-one ounces a day) and for their other food (which was bad and consisted of a first and second course served them twice a day). And they were even charged for the Chuvash bast sandals which they were issued.

Among the detachment members one was designated the commandant and another the chief of the detachment. But they had no rights. The whole show was bossed by M. Zheltov, the chief of the repair and construction office. He was like a prince who did exactly whatever he liked. When he gave orders, some of the detachment members were deprived of bread and lunch for one or two days at a time. ("Where was there a law like that?" Loshchilin asked. "Even in camp it wasn't like that.") And at the same time front-line soldiers recovering from wounds and still weak entered the detachment. There was a woman doctor attached to the detachment. She had the right to release prisoners from work because of illness, but Zheltov forbade her to. And being afraid of him, she wept, and she did not hide it from the detachment members. (That is *freedom*! That is our freedom for you!) Everyone got infected with lice, and the bunks were swarming with bedbugs.

But then this was no camp! They could complain! And they did complain. They wrote to the provincial newspaper and to the provincial Party committee. And there was no answer from anywhere. The only response came from the municipal medical department, which carried out a thorough disinfection, gave everyone a good bath, and gave everyone a set of underwear and some bedding—all to be charged against their wages (!).

In the winter of 1944–1945, at the beginning of his third year in the detachment, Loshchilin's own footwear became simply unusable and he did not go to work. He was then and there tried for absenteeism—and given three months of corrective-labor work in that very same detachment with a fine of 25 percent deducted from his wages.

In the spring damp Loshchilin could no longer walk about in

bast sandals, and once again did not go to work. Once again he was sentenced—which, if one counts the other times he had been sentenced in absentia, made the fourth time in his life! This time he was sentenced in the so-called Red Corner of the barracks, and the verdict was three months of imprisonment.

But . . . they did not imprison him! Because it was unprofitable for the state to undertake the maintenance of Loshchilin! Because there was no form of imprisonment which could be worse than this labor detachment.

This was in March, 1945. And nothing worse would have happened, had it not been for the fact that earlier he had written a complaint to the Apartment Maintenance Section of the garrison to the effect that Zheltov had promised to issue secondhand footwear to all of them but did not do so. (And the reason that he alone wrote such a complaint was that any *collective* complaint was strictly forbidden. For any such collective complaint, since it was contrary to the spirit of socialism, they could have given sentences under 58.)

So they summoned Loshchilin to the Personnel Section: "Turn in your work clothes!" And the only thing that that mute slogger had ever gotten for his three years of labor—*his work apron*—Loshchilin took off and put quietly on the floor! And right there stood the precinct policeman who had been summoned by the Apartment Maintenance Section. He took Loshchilin off to the police station and, in the evening, to the prison, but the duty officer at the prison found something not in order in his documents and refused to accept him.

And the policeman then took Loshchilin back to the police station. And the road went past their detachment's barracks. And the policeman said: "Oh, go on, go there and rest; you aren't going to run off anywhere anyway. Wait for me one of these days."

April, 1945, came to an end. The legendary divisions had already rolled to the Elbe and surrounded Berlin. Every day the nation fired off salutes, flooding the heavens with red, green, and gold flares. On April 24 Loshchilin was imprisoned in the Ulyanovsk Provincial Prison. Its cells were just as overcrowded as they had been in 1937. Seventeen and a half ounces of bread, soup made from fodder turnips, or if from potatoes from small potatoes, unpeeled and poorly washed. May 9, Victory Day,

he spent in his cell. (For several days they did not even know about the end of the war.) Just as Loshchilin had greeted the war behind bars, that is how he also bade it farewell.

After Victory Day they sent off to a work colony the *decree prisoners*—in other words, absentees, those tardy at work, and sometimes also those who had been caught at petty thievery at work. What they did there was earth-moving work, construction, and unloading barges. They fed them badly. The camp was a new one. There was no doctor in it and not even a nurse. Loshchilin got chilled and developed an inflammation of the sciatic nerve—and he was driven out to work anyway. He was on his last legs, and his legs had swelled up, and he was in a constant fever. They kept on driving him out to work all the same.

On July 7, 1945, the famous Stalinist amnesty struck. But Loshchilin did not have to last out until he was released under its terms—for on July 24 his own three-month term came to an end, and they let him out then and there.

"All the same," says Loshchilin, "in my soul I am a Bolshevik. When I die, consider me a Communist."

Maybe he's joking, but then again maybe he's not.



I do not have here the materials to complete this chapter the way I would like—to demonstrate the striking intersection of Russian lives and the laws of the Archipelago. And I have no hope that I will be granted another secure and unhurried period in which to carry out one more editing of this book, and at that time to include the missing life stories.

I think it would be very appropriate here to include a sketch on the life, prison and camp persecutions, and death of Father Pavel A. Florensky, perhaps one of the most remarkable men devoured by the Archipelago of all time. Well-informed people say of him that he was a scholar rare for the twentieth century, who had attained a professional mastery of a multitude of knowledge. He was educated as a mathematician, and in his youth he had experienced a deep religious conversion and become a priest. The book he had written in his youth, *The Pillar and the Affirmation of the Truth*, is only today coming into its own. He had to his credit many essays in mathematics (topological

theorems, proved much later in the West), in art history (on Russian icons, on religious drama), and on philosophical and religious subjects. (His archive has been in the main preserved and has not yet been published. I have not had access to it.) After the Revolution he was a professor at the Electrical Engineering Institute (where he delivered his lectures in his priest's robes). In 1927 he expressed ideas anticipating those of Wiener. In 1932 he published in the magazine *Socialist Reconstruction and Science* an essay on machines for the solution of problems which were close in spirit to cybernetics. Soon after that he was arrested. His prison career is known to me only at several separate points, which I list with trepidation: exile in Siberia (in exile he wrote works and published them under a pseudonym in the works of the Siberian expedition of the Academy of Sciences), Solovki, and after Solovki was shut down the Far North, and according to some sources the Kolyma. In the Kolyma he studied flora and minerals (in addition to his work with a pick). Neither the place nor the date of his death in camp is known. But according to some rumors he was shot during wartime.

I certainly intended to cite here also the life of Valentin I. Komov from the Yefremov District, with whom I was imprisoned in the years 1950 to 1952 in Ekibastuz, but I simply do not recall enough about him, and I ought to have remembered more details. In 1929, when he was a seventeen-year-old boy, he killed the chairman of the local village soviet and fled. After that the only way he could exist and hide was as a thief. He was imprisoned several times, always as a thief. In 1941 he was released. The Germans carried him off to Germany. Did he collaborate with them? No, he ran away twice and as a result landed in Buchenwald. He was liberated from there by the Allies. Did he stay in the West? No, under his authentic family name ("The Motherland has forgiven, the Motherland calls you!") he returned to his own village, where he married and worked in the collective farm. In 1946 he was imprisoned under 58 for his 1929 crime. He was released in 1955. If this biography were set forth in detail, it would explain much to us about the Russian lives of those decades. In addition, Komov was a typical camp brigadier—a "son of Gulag." (And even in the hard-labor camp he was not afraid to shout at the chief at the general roll call, "Why do we have a Fascist system in our camp?")

Finally, it would have been appropriate to include in this

chapter the biography of some socialist who was exceptional—in personal qualities, in the steadfastness of his views—in order to show his peregrinations through the moves of the Big Solitaire over a period of many years.

And perhaps the biography of some inveterate MVD man—a Garanin, or a Zavenyagin, or else someone not so well known—would have been highly suitable here.

But evidently I am not fated to do all that. Breaking off this book at the beginning of 1967,⁴ I do not count on having a chance to return to the theme of the Archipelago.

Anyway, it's enough. I have been with it . . . twenty years.

4. No, completing it a year later.